1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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FOLK LIFE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE VILLAGE

It is not without significance that in ceremonies of circumcision and marriage, the boy and the man have to visit the mosque in a ceremonial way where dates and food are distributed. In praise of marriage, a villager would quote the Prophet's saying, 'He who marries has perfected half his religious requirements, and he has only to fear God in the other half'. It is also worth stating that the majority of the personal names of both sexes have some religious meaning or are the names of some religious personalities.

The importance of sacredness not only permeates those levels, justifying acts and deeds, but also reaches the substance of living, namely, foodstuffs and bread, usually referred to as the 'sustenance of Islam' and which are considered to be sacred. A good harvest is a sign of God's approval; a torrent of rain which destroys the villagers' crops is a sign of His disapproval. To impart holiness to the land before sowing, or to the harvest before threshing, a sacrifice of an animal and the partaking of a communal meal are desirable acts. According to the enlightened religious view, the villagers do not distinguish between pagan and the proper Islamic concepts. The village schoolmaster said that the belief in the power of saints, sorcery, and magic, and the appeal to divination and ritual for healing the sick as practised in the village, are complexly interwoven with Islamic beliefs, but they are not in fact a part of the pure Faith.[1] It is believed that sickness might be inflicted by a saint for not fulfilling a vow taken in his name, or for not offering him his due customary gift and sacrifice. A great deal of treatment of disease and of acquiring of good luck could be achieved by prayers, sacred charms, and propitiation of saints. The strength of the religious force could be also ascertained from the fact that the most binding guarantee for a promise is to swear by the name of Allah or to read the Fatiha. It is also customary for the villagers to take an oath sacrifice for God or a saint, which is a kind of conditional oath involving the slaying of an animal on the fulfilment of a certain task and the attendant danger that may ensue in the event of perjury.

The certainty and uniformity in religious beliefs and rituals specially noted in the observance of the fasting month, is an index of the religious group cohesiveness. All the villagers belong to the Maliki school of the Sunni tradition. Most of the adult villagers attend the Friday noon prayers, and say their regular daily prayers either at home or in the mosque. There is a well-known Islamic tradition believed by the villagers that group prayers are more efficacious and rewarding than those said alone.

It is no exaggeration to say that the folk culture of the village is permeated by religious sanctions and moral values derived from the Islamic traditions as revealed in the Koran and also infused with rituals and beliefs of an older tradition. It is not difficult to assert that there is hardly

[1] See John Walker, *Folk Medicine in Modern Egypt*, London, 1934. Sir E. A. Wallis Budge, *Amulets and Superstitions*, London, 1930.

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customs like the people in Silwa. The visiting priest who comes yearly to the village is certainly welcome on his arrival, and people flock to him for advice on religious matters. On attending one of these meetings, the writer was struck by the number of questions that those present put to him concerning the details of prayers, e.g. whether one lifts his hand up to his shoulder or up to his ears, how one sits on after prostration, what one might say before and after prayers. Other questions that arose were queries about whether certain sayings or deeds were considered to be religiously approved or disapproved, how and to whom one would make a sacrifice oath, whether visiting saints' tombs is a good thing or not, and so forth.

Village life, on the whole, whether in religious or social spheres, is very ritually and ceremonially conscious, and almost invulnerable on this level. Greeting, hospitality, eating, praying, exchange of social obligations, circumcision, marriage, and dozens of items of life are shrouded with ritual and traditional prescriptions. My informant, Mahmoud, told me that after a sermon given by a preacher coming from the city, who told the villagers that their customs practised on the death of a person were non-Islamic, they took a vow not to practise them any more. Yet the adherence to the oath was made for some six months, after which people gradually relapsed to their traditional ways, with the only exception that women were allowed to follow the deceased as far as the southern end of the village instead of going on to the cemetery as had been the practice hitherto.

The extent of social change on the folkhood of the village could be also examined in the villagers' ideas about sickness and disease which are mixed with ritual and religious beliefs. Disease, it is supposed, can be caused either by failure to fulfil some religious ritual or ceremony, such as a financially able man not performing his pilgrimage, or the failure to give the promised offerings to a saint, or providing a naming ceremony for a new-born baby. If saints are suspected as the cause of the disease, usually a woman known to be the guardian of that particular saint, or upon whom saints descend, would be consulted to tell whether the family has broken or forgotten a sacrificial custom. If no special saint has been offended, then bread could be specially baked and distributed as a 'karama' amongst people after the Friday prayer, asking God to relieve the sick.

Sickness can also be caused by the evil eye, and in such cases a learned man is asked to recite verses from the Koran or write a charm (higab) to be worn by the sick person as a prophylactic safeguard as well as a means of treatment. Certain diseases like paralysis are believed to be caused by the evil red wind emanating from the touch of jinn; an epileptic is also a person who is mounted and obsessed by jinn who usually haunt deserted places, wells, and high spots in the mountains. Curiously enough, tuberculosis is believed to be caused by pretence and social conceit.

Moreover, a sickness is considered as God's test for the endurance and patience of the faithful. As the faithful are always exposed to affliction, their faith in God should never be shaken, and hence their endurance of

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sickness is a pious deed. It is often told to a sick person that holy people have suffered from one ailment or another and have endured it willingly for God.

All this shows how the villagers' traditional notions about health and sickness are mixed with magical and religious beliefs; God is the afflicter as well as the healer; it is He who has fixed the life span of every person, and this cannot be lengthened or precipitated by a second, much less a minute, unless He wills it. Together with this, there is the belief that hope and propitiation cannot fail to produce some expected results in certain crises of life.

The village has experienced some measure of direct contact with modern medicine as a result of the establishment of a health unit by the Ministry of Health in 1936. This health unit is a wonderful building, situated on the southern border of the village, and is composed of a maternity section, an isolation ward, and a general section. It cost the Government about £E3,000, yet it has never functioned properly or systematically as doctors who came to it could hardly endure life in the village for more than six months, whereupon they tried every possible means to be transferred to towns. The villagers appreciated the health unit at the beginning, but their resentment to it was ironically aroused during the malaria and typhoid epidemic of 1943 on the grounds that sick people were taken away to the isolation ward, and dying away from one's relatives and home is the worst thing that can happen to any person. This hostility towards it is expressed with reference to its unfortunate location, it being near the cemetery; thus going to the health unit has become psychologically a bad omen. However, the establishment of the health unit has given folk-medicine the greatest challenge, and at present the villagers are becoming increasingly interested in medicine as such, alongside their usual traditional cures. In serious cases the doctor's help is usually sought besides the traditional cures, and it is becoming a sign of social prestige to bring him into the home of the sick; but remaining in hospital for treatment or isolation for contagious diseases is still resisted.

Although one finds that the villagers have adopted certain items of material culture from the town, such as the use of manufactured goods, new types of vegetables, and some medicines, such adoption is a surface substitution. Their ideas about land ownership, the importance of children, family and clan solidarity, categories of respect relationships, sex dichotomy, supernatural sanctions, and the importance of ritual and ceremony in both social and religious life, remain almost unaltered.

There is, however, one feature in the village's social life that has undergone a certain amount of change as a result of changes in the economic conditions, and that is the role and function of leadership. Till very recently leadership has been mainly connected with families owning large plots of land; and such families assumed the responsibility and obligation for receiving guests from outside the village, providing hospitality for

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Chapter Four

BIRTH, INFANCY AND EARLY TRAINING

PREGNANCY and giving birth are perhaps the most important events in a married woman's life, and therefore the characteristics and symptoms of pregnancy are easily recognized in the female circles in the village. Unless otherwise stated most of the information given in this chapter has been supplied by a female relative of the writer. The informant divided the period of pregnancy into three main stages:

The first is the month of secrecy (al shahr al sirry) when, at the stopping of menstruation, the woman realizes that she is going to conceive. The news should be kept a secret from all except the closest family circle. If any neighbours or visitors should enquire about it, it should be positively denied. This atmosphere of secrecy should be kept up as long as possible for fear of the evil eye. It is believed that at this early stage the embryo is more susceptible to the influences of the evil eye than at any other stage.

In the second month, the woman may declare, still with reluctance, that she is heavy, or carrying (thagila or hamil). During this month it is said she is prone to feel dizzy (daikha), and is much inclined to stretch and sleep readily. It is believed that during this period also God starts shaping the prospective baby; consequently a pregnant woman should not be awakened by anybody if she is asleep, lest such disturbance hamper or interfere with the process of creation. Children's congenital defects or abnormalities, e.g. six fingers, split lip, bulging forehead, are attributed to the fact that the mother's sleep was disturbed during this period.

The third important stage is that of craving (waham) which is experienced by the woman during the third and fourth months. During this stage the pregnant woman is allowed free and wider choice in her food. She is demanding articles of food which she 'craves for' continually, and they are usually items that are rare or at least not within everyday access, e.g. melons, fruit, savouries and the like. Eating is supposed to stand her in good stead during the ordeal of pregnancy and birth.

The husband must do his best to provide his wife with what she craves for, otherwise he would be socially disparaged by his wife's family. It is a common theme in village gossip to refer to a woman who is always strain-

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BIRTH, INFANCY AND EARLY TRAINING

The carrying out of a 'kaboos'—presenting oneself uninvited, secretly and suddenly at a 'place'—is another device to induce pregnancy. An old woman, or a young non-menstruating girl, is asked to collect some maize seeds from seven married women, who have been the only wives of their husbands. The old woman puts the maize into a pot to be cooked in the oven overnight. The woman who desires to become pregnant goes to visit, as if unexpected, the old woman, who presents her with the pot to walk over seven times, and then washes her private parts with the water at home.

Sometimes a woman desirous of pregnancy pawns her jewellery to a woman who is not menstruating, and asks her to put it underneath her pillow while sleeping for some nights. This woman does so and then puts the jewels in a pot filled with water. The first woman comes to visit her and to step over the pot seven times, followed by a wash similar to the previous one.

In the case of a newly-married girl who does not conceive, the ceremony of marriage is often re-enacted in the house but on a smaller scale by non-menstruating women in the same way as during the actual ceremony. The wife makes two dolls, one representing herself, and another the bridegroom. Only female friends and relatives are invited and the doll bride and bridegroom are tucked up in bed. This is supposed to relieve the wife from the first marriage shock which may have caused her inability to conceive.[1]

These are a few examples of the ways to which women resort for inducing pregnancy, and they all imply producing a psychological state for the attainment of release and embodying the sublime folly of hope found in magical rites.[2] In such practices, one can regard the connection between economic fertility symbols (earth, maize, jewellery, sand, water) and women's fertility as some survivals of reincarnation beliefs. Although in some of these practices one might get the impression of an atonement for a woman's evil intention (sense of guilt), the emphasis, as I gathered from my informants, was the 'evil eye' of others or their manœuvres to cause such sterility or 'binding'. Out of the sixteen methods collected, ten of them explicitly indicate accusation of others for such a state, a mechanism which some psychologists call 'projecting repressed hostility'.

Although a pregnant woman is theoretically advised not to work hard or carry heavy things during the ninth month, one often hears of women in childbirth who have just returned from the Nile (i.e. water-carrying),

[1] According to Frazer's analysis of magic, this could be considered as imitative magic, by performing what one desires to happen in actuality. To the same category belongs the taboo on pregnant women, especially after the seventh month, with regard to spinning, as the child might get entangled in her womb. In Silwa, contagious magic also exists in the so-called 'taking the smell of somebody' (riha), especially in cases of harm done through the evil eye, where a part of the 'envier's' clothes is taken and burnt with salt, to dispel his or her evil effects.

[2] B. Malinowski, 'Magic, Science and Religion', in *Science, Religion and Reality*, edited by J. A. Needham, London, 1936.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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this manner when they are still very young (Fig. 25), for tattooing is considered to be of benefit to them. According to one of my informants, the dot tattooed at the side of the nostril is sometimes done as a cure for toothache. It is a very common mark among a large number of the Arabs; one of them told me that it was done as a sign of their race.

Many of the men among the *fellāḥīn* have a tattoo mark on either temple, the mark being often in the shape of a bird. This is sometimes purely a form of decoration, but it is also done as a cure for headache. One man I know has three short, straight lines tattooed near one side of his forehead. He told me that this was done when he was a boy, as the eye on the same side as the tattoo marks was very weak. He declared that it effected an almost immediate and quite permanent cure.

FIG. 25. WOMAN TATTOOING A YOUNG BOY

Another man I know had three dots tattooed about an inch and a half above each nipple, and three more in the centre of his chest. He also had three more dots tattooed on each shoulder-blade and one behind one ear. He gave me the following account of the history of these marks. One cold day he was warming himself over a fire on which was being cooked some fish which smelled unpleasantly. A woman glanced at his chest, which was bare, but he drew his clothes over it so that she should not see it. From that moment he began to itch, and the people said that he was affected by the fumes (*buhāḳ*)—those, I presume, from the fish. As a remedy for this he was tattooed with the dots as described above, which immediately cured him.

If a woman has lost several children in succession, when another

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THE FELLAHIN OF UPPER EGYPT

If a woman has lost several children in succession, when another one arrives she has it tattooed with a small dot in the centre of its forehead and another on the outer side of the left ankle. She believes that after this the child will live, because her *ḫarīneḥ*, seeing these marks, will not attempt to take her child.[1] The belief is that when King David had the interview with the queen of the *aḳrān* described in the following chapter she promised that any child that had these tattoo marks on the forehead and ankle should not be injured by its mother's *ḫarīneḥ*.

One man, who was a village guard far south in Upper Egypt, had a fish tattooed on the inner side of one arm, near the wrist. He told me that it was done some years before, when he was possessed by an *'afrīt*, that it quite cured him, and that he had never been troubled in that way since. This fish mark does not always serve a curative purpose, for in a village much farther north I saw a boy with a similar design tattooed on the back of one of his hands, and he assured me that it was done only as an ornament.

Most of the Copts have a cross tattooed on the inner sides of the wrists There is a belief among some, if not all, of those Copts belonging to the *fellāḥīn* class that the Abyssinians will one day conquer Egypt, and will kill all the Copts as well as the Muslims if they (the Copts) cannot show this sign on their wrists. The Copts will, it is said, hold up their hands, thus exposing to view the sign of their religion.

One Coptic friend of mine, a man of good position, showed me some tattoo marks on his arm. There was an elaborate pattern on the inner side of his arm, below which were tattooed the dates of the two occasions on which he had gone on pilgrimages to Jerusalem—1911 and 1914. Another Copt told me that his little sister also had the year of her visit to Jerusalem tattooed on one arm, and that in future the year of each succeeding pilgrimage that she made to the sacred city would be similarly recorded. His mother, who had performed the pilgrimage on several occasions, had had each year of this event tattooed on one of her arms. Tattooing can thus be a means of record-keeping.

The operation of tattooing is an exceedingly painful one, and has very often unpleasant results, though the discomfort may be only temporary. One of my servants, a young man of about twenty-two years of age, was very anxious to have the back of his right hand tattooed this year. A specialist in the art was usually

[1] See pp. 69 ff. for explanation of *ḫarīneḥ*.

PERSONAL DECORATION AND ORNAMENTS

being treated in this manner, and it seemed to be a somewhat painful process. However, "*Il faut souffrir pour être belle*," and these women do endure considerable discomfort in the course of their toilet.

The toffee-like substance described above is also used by women in a similar way in order to pull out any hairs that may be growing on their legs.

Most women and girls paint round the eyes with antimony (Arabic, *kohl*). It is kept in a small bottle, generally of glass, called *mikhaleh*, and is applied with a short stick with a blunt point. It is regarded not only as a beautifier, but also as a cure for sore eyes.

Scent is used by both sexes, some of it being of a very pungent nature. In some parts of Egypt it is taboo for a man to use scent while his wife is suckling her child. If he disobeys this rule the child, it is said, will come out all over in spots. A man whom I knew well used some scent on one occasion while his wife was still suckling their youngest-born. The child got nasty spots all over its body, and the mother told me that it was her husband's fault, because he had been putting some scent on his moustache!

I have sometimes heard English people remark on the dirty habit that the Egyptian peasant women have of wearing long dresses which trail over the ground, brushing up the dust in clouds as they go along. It is, of course, a very insanitary practice, but the wearing of short skirts would be looked upon as most immodest. A woman's legs should never be exposed, except from dire necessity. There is also another reason for the trailing skirts. Most peasant women walk barefooted, and so leave clearly defined footprints in the dry, dusty soil. A woman can be injured magically through her foot-prints, and so the long skirt acts as a safeguard, brushing over and thus obliterating them.

Little girls wear very bright-coloured cotton frocks, which reach almost to the ground (see Fig. 17). The women and older girls may wear such frocks indoors, but when they walk abroad, either to shop, to fill their water-jars, or to visit their friends, they wear a long black dress over the coloured one, and a thick veil, shawl-shaped, over their heads.

I was told by a friend some few years ago that in Sharkiyeh Province the women wear long white veils, on which are several gold or silver ornaments. These ornaments are in the form of

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number of crosses is placed in that part of the room where the child lies. It is believed that by this means no *'afārīt* can come near the child and that the mother's *ḳarīneh* cannot injure it.

Every human being is said to be born with a double, which is quite distinct from the *'afrīt*,[1] and it is called, in the case of a man, the *ḳarīn* (colleague, companion), in the case of a woman *ḳarīneh*. The man is always born with his male, as is the woman with her female, counterpart, according to the prevailing belief among most of the *felláḥīn*. The *ginn*, or *'afārīt*, are often called "our brothers and sisters beneath the earth," but they are separate beings from the *aḳrān* (plural of *ḳarīn*), though the two communities are in touch with each other.

The *aḳrān* are believed to be of different colours, some being white, some black; their looks also vary, as some are beautiful and some are ugly. This belief is easily accounted for, as each person's *ḳarīn* is a facsimile of himself or herself, and doubtless the colours are racial distinctions. The *aḳrān* are not, I believe, always malevolent, though stories of their mischief-making propensities are commoner than accounts of their good deeds.

Not only do the *aḳrān* resemble their prototypes on earth in person, but also in character—in fact, they faithfully reflect in themselves all the actions, both good and bad, of their earthly duplicates. Thus, if a man or woman gets into a temper his or her double does the same; if he or she suffers pain and sickness, so does his *ḳarīn* or her *ḳarīneh*. This point was brought out clearly one day three years ago when a large number of women had come to see me and to have their eyes doctored. One of them was speaking about her *ḳarīneh*, so I said, "But your eyes are very bad now, what about those of your *ḳarīneh*?"

"Oh," she replied, "her eyes also are bad."

"Poor thing," I said. "But who is looking after her eyes?"

"Why, your *ḳarīneh*, *ginēh es-sitt* [honoured lady]," the woman immediately answered.

The following is another example of the intimate connexion between a human being and his or her double. When an argument begins between two or more men or women and a mischievous bystander wants to lead them into a real quarrel he will take two bricks and place them on their ends, each tilted against the other, or he will take off one of his shoes and place it on the

[1] See p. 237.

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the infant, hanging it round its neck till it is seven years old, after which period it will be immune.

The *ḳarīneh* seen by King David was the queen of them all, and the promise she gave is binding on all her subjects. She herself is not, according to my informant, the double of any human being; she is by herself, and, like the king of the *aḫrān*, lives for ever.

A woman's *ḳarīneh* may do good or evil to her children till they have passed the age of seven years. She does harm, so I was told, only if the mother has been doing something wrong, or has been jealous of another. For instance, if the *ḳarīneh* clutches a child by the throat it means that the child's mother has been ill-tempered, and so on.

A man's *ḳarīn* does not affect his children; it only affects him. If he should lose his temper with his wife or family, or with his friends, or does wrong in any way, and goes to bed unrepentant, he may wake up in the morning and find that some illness has attacked him. This has been caused by his *ḳarīn*. When he is sorry and has expressed his repentance, or has called in a magician, who will give him a charm to wear under his left arm, he will be cured.

If a child seems sickly and gets thinner and weaker every day the mother knows that her *ḳarīneh* is trying to draw her child away from her. Various methods are employed to mitigate this evil. Near a small village in Asyūṭ Province there is a large stone which is called the stone of the Sheikheh Fāṭimeh, who is believed to be buried here. If a child is being drawn away by its mother's *ḳarīneh* the mother will take it on a Friday to this stone, near which she will place the child, she herself staying to watch over it. If the child goes to sleep quietly the mother knows that it will recover, but if it cries and refuses to sleep she takes it home again, knowing full well that it will shortly die. I have myself seen a child lying near the stone fast asleep, with its mother sitting by.

In a village in Middle Egypt there is an old, disused graveyard, crowned by the domed tomb of a celebrated local sheikh. The other graves are now fallen into ruin, and many of them show large, gaping hollows (Fig. 32). A woman whose child is affected by her *ḳarīneh* will take it and place it in one of these cavities, the results being the same as in the case of the stone of the Sheikheh Fāṭimeh. This is a common custom in many parts of Egypt.

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BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

A child under eight years of age may suddenly begin to shake all over, gasping, and catching at its throat, as if it could not breathe. When this happens the grandmother, or, if there is no grandmother, a neighbour, is called in, and she takes the child, or, if there is more than one child under eight years of age, each one in turn, on to her lap and folds her *gallabīyeh* (native dress) over it. Then she takes a spindle and the implement (*maḥalleh*) on to which the wool is wound after it is spun, and winds the wool on to it; if there is no wool she will simulate the action of winding.

FIG. 32. RUINED GRAVES, IN THE APERTURES OF WHICH CHILDREN ARE PLACED WHEN AFFECTED BY THE MOTHER'S ḲARĪNEH

Then she will break both the spindle and the *maḥalleh*, and the child will recover.

A woman's *ḳarīneh* may sometimes perform a kindly action, for a certain woman who is related to a man whom I know always declares that her *ḳarīneh* is very good to her. This woman has ten boys and two girls, and she is a widow and very poor. Her *ḳarīneh*, so she says, often comes to her when she is short of money and cannot do anything to help herself or her children. On one occasion when she was in this plight she heard her *ḳarīneh* call her by name three times while she was sleeping at night. Her *ḳarīneh* then took her by the hand and led her down the street in which she lived. When she got to the end of it the *ḳarīneh* put some money in her hand and left her. The woman then returned to her house.

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ledge this woman is of an exceedingly jealous disposition, which no doubt accounts for that particular trait being exhibited in her *ukht*! Her husband is a decent man, but I have had no opportunity of judging as to whether he is jealous or not. However, one must presume that he is so, in view of the fact that his *ukht* appears to possess this quality in so marked a degree!

As will be seen below on p. 186, some of the subterranean beings also have each an *ukht*.

FIG. 34. CHILD WEARING FROCK AND HOOD OF SACKING

A woman remains unclean for forty days after giving birth to a boy and for thirty days if the child is a girl. I have also been informed that the husband must not enter the room occupied by his wife for seven days after the birth, and that if he wishes to speak to her he must do so from a distance. I am not sure if this is always the rule, but it is so among some of the *felläḥīn*.

A child is not washed at all until the seventh day after birth, and then the face, hands, and feet only are washed. When I endeavoured to make the women understand how unhealthy this was they declared that they were afraid to wash a child until it was seven days old, and then only to the limited extent just mentioned, for fear of its catching cold. On one occasion a child was brought to me in a most filthy state, and covered from head to foot with suppurating sores. I told the mother that I would not give her any medicine until she had washed the child. On hearing this she became terribly distressed, and declared that she could not wash it. I remained firm, however, in my refusal to give her anything until she had made the child cleaner. It transpired that the child's father had had spots on his body when he was younger,

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

I suggest that it may possibly be a way of emphasizing the fact that the boy has now definitely joined the male community by undergoing this operation, and that therefore he is no longer under the control of his mother and her female relatives. This is a pure guess, and is brought forward only as a possible explanation of this somewhat curious custom. 852

It is a common belief all over Egypt that the souls of twins when they have passed babyhood often leave their bodies at night and enter the bodies of cats. These animals, therefore, are usually very kindly treated. The following stories were told me in connexion with this belief, and my informant declared that they were true and that he knew the people concerned. 774 835 845

In a small village in Asyût Province there was a boy who was one of twins, his twin, however, being dead. One night a cat came to a house and clambered on to the flat roof, upon which were some of the usual mud granaries. Some *kishk*, which is made of wheat mixed with milk, dried in the sun, and then cut up, was stored in one of these receptacles. It is often offered to visitors as a great delicacy. The cat knocked the lid off the granary which contained the *kishk*, jumped into it, and began to eat some of the contents. A member of the household happened to go on to the roof, and, seeing the granary uncovered, immediately put the lid on it without noticing that the cat was inside. It remained covered for three days, keeping the cat a prisoner. During this period the boy mentioned above remained motionless and unconscious on his bed, his soul being in the body of the imprisoned cat. [251] [262] [574] 753 774 845

After the third day some visitors arrived at the house where was the granary in question, and one of the family went to get some of the *kishk* out of it to offer the guests. When the lid was removed the cat jumped out and ran away. Immediately after this the soul of the twin returned to his body, and he rose from his bed quite well.

One evening a cat in whose body the soul of a twin happened to be temporarily incarnate was struck on the head by a woman. On the following day the twin in question came to this woman and accused her of striking him the previous night, pointing out to her exactly where she had hit him, and complaining that the blow had caused him considerable pain.

If a cat is killed while the soul of a twin is in its body the twin dies also. For this reason cats are rarely killed. 761 774 835 845

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DEATH AND FUNERARY CEREMONIES

That the souls of the dead come to the cemeteries is again shown in the following belief. I have been told by two or three of my village friends that when the people go to visit the cemetery, and they see a number of small green birds near the graves, they believe that these birds are the souls of the dead who lie buried there. Lane[1] says that "Souls of martyrs (*shuhadá*) reside in the crops of green birds, which eat of the fruits of Paradise and drink of its rivers." This is the belief as he heard it. It was definitely stated to me that the green birds *are* the souls of the dead.

There are certain taboos on mourners, two of which are the following. If a person, male or female, has attended a funeral and walked in the procession, or even only gone part of the way, he or she must not enter the house where a woman has a baby under seven days old, for this will cause the mother to have no milk. Such a person must inform the mother of the child that he desires to enter her house, and she must then go outside to meet the visitor, who can then come into it without any evil consequences.

Again, no such mourner must enter a house in which there is some one suffering from sore eyes, for in that case the sufferer will lose his or her sight. Such intending visitors must wait outside the house, and the man or woman who has sore eyes must come out and meet them there first, and then they can enter without danger.

The death and funeral rites of the Copts are in many respects very similar to those of the Muslims.

The following incidents were witnessed by me several years ago when I was staying in a small village in Fayûm Province, and this account of what I actually saw will best describe the ceremonies incident to the death and burial of a Copt. It must always be remembered that these are accounts of death and funeral rites as practised by the peasants only, and that they are not meant to be a description of the ceremonies which take place among educated people on similar occasions.

Early one morning a visitor brought to the house where I was staying the news of the death of a poor but much respected Copt who lived in an adjacent village. It was suggested that his relations and friends would much appreciate a visit from me, so I started off on my donkey as soon as possible after the sad tidings had reached me. It was not long before I arrived at the house of

[1] *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1871), vol. i, p. 83.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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figure (Fig. 119), supposed to represent the man he wishes to injure. If wax is used the figure is sometimes thrown into a fire, incantations being uttered by the magician at the same time. If clay is used the figure may be placed in water. As these figures disappear in the fire or water the man who is to be affected gradually dies. Such an extreme measure is very rarely resorted to—indeed, it would be exceedingly difficult to find a magician who would consent to carry it out, even with the promise of a large sum of money. There is supposed to be no cure for the man against whom such magic is worked; he is bound to die, as the figures cannot be rescued from the fire or the water.

FIG. 119. WAX FIGURES USED IN BLACK MAGIC

Such wax or clay figures are more commonly used to bring about rather less direful results in the people whom they are supposed to represent. Needles or pins are stuck into them, or, if these are not available, the sharp points of palm-leaves may be used instead. Wherever the pin or other sharp point is inserted into the figure the person who is represented will feel pain in the corresponding part of his body, until the pin is removed from the clay or wax figure. This pricking of the figure should always be done by the magician himself, who accompanies such actions with the recitation of magic spells. If the man who is being thus injured guesses what is causing him pain he will go to the magician and induce him by larger payments of money to remove the pin from the figure. The moment this is done the pain felt by the man ceases.

Similar practices have been resorted to up to quite recent times in more than one part of the British Isles, and are still current in many parts of the world, as the collection of such objects in the Pitt-Rivers Museum at Oxford well demonstrates.

I have already at the beginning of this chapter stated that some people are believed to be possessed by sheikhs, these sheikhs being among the many subterranean peoples whose existence is firmly believed in by the peasants. Such sheikhs may be good or bad; if the former they will assist the person they possess, if the latter they will require to be constantly appeased.

Possession may come suddenly, no one knows how. It is also

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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THE VILLAGE MEDICINE-MAN

Each leaf should be rolled up separately, tied up with string, and hung round the child's neck. It is believed that as soon as the leaves dry the child's coughing will stop.

This prescription, given as a cure for a cough, is, so I was told by the sheikh who prescribed it, very old. Some seeds of the cotton-plant which have been dried over the fire are pounded up into a powder. The patient should take some of this dry, early in the morning and also at night.

There are a number of cures for various diseases which are well known to the people themselves, so that it is not always necessary to call in the aid of the 'doctor.' Among the large number which I have collected are the following.

Cure for a cough. A bunch of camel's hair is placed on the chest of the patient, and another bunch on the top of the head, the hair being first steeped in oil. Both bunches are kept in position by large handkerchiefs bound round the body and over the head. This is believed to make the patient perspire, after which the cough goes. This cure is used for children only.

FIG. 125. CHARM TO CURE A CHILD'S COUGH

A man who lives in a small Upper Egyptian village began, two or three years ago, to suffer from rheumatism in his legs. He got worse and worse, until he was so crippled that he was unable to walk. He consulted several doctors, so I was told, but they could do him no good. One day, when some of his friends came to see him, he told them how useless was all the medical treatment he had received. They therefore persuaded him to try the following remedy. Having made several cuts in both legs, he took some garlic and squeezed the juice of it over the cuts, rubbing it well in. The pain was awful, and the man wept from the agony. However, he persisted in the treatment every day for a fortnight. Each day a lot of pus came away—"yellow water" it was called when I was told about this remedy—and each day he got better, and the

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753 pain from the rheumatism less. The incisions were made once
757 only, but the juice from the garlic was squeezed over the cuts every
978 day. At the end of a fortnight, so I was told, the man was completely cured! I fancy that the peasants believe that the rheumatism, or, at any rate, the cause of it, comes away in what they call "the yellow water."

755 Sometimes a silk thread is drawn through the skin in the region of the stomach as a cure for a pain in that organ. The skin is picked up between the finger and thumb, and a needle threaded with silk is passed through it lengthways. The silk thread is then roughly tied and left in the skin for about six days. Then it is drawn slightly to the left or right, when it is probably found to be covered with pus. A day or two after it is drawn in the opposite direction, when more pus will be removed. This process is repeated on several successive days, until all signs of pus have disappeared. There is a raised scar left when the skin has healed. Sometimes a silk thread is drawn through the outer edge of the upper part of the ear as a cure for fever, in the case both of children and grown-up people. To cure pain in the side, stomach, or back a small plain ring is inserted in the upper edge of the ear.

A person suffering from a cough takes one of the strings which form the warp of a reed mat and places one end on the top of his head, holding it there, while the other end is passed round one of his toes, or is held on the ground by his feet. The string is then
[764] placed inside the wrappings of a person who has just died, and is thus carried to the grave. The cough of the living person disappears. The same remedy is employed for fever and shivering, only a knot must then be made near one end of the string.

978 As a cure for diarrhœa some leaves from a sycamore are dried
757 in the oven, or in the sun if it is very hot. When dry the leaves are pounded into a powder, of which the patient takes two teaspoonfuls, mixed with a little sugar, every morning. It usually takes two days to effect a cure, though it may sometimes take a little longer.

As a cure for inflamed or sore eyes the dung of a black donkey (a male) is made hot in the fire, put in a piece of muslin, and then applied. This treatment must be repeated constantly, a fresh poultice being administered as soon as the first is cold, and so on till the eye is cured. After a time, according to my informant, a

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CHAPTER XIII

THE EVIL EYE AND OTHER SUPERSTITIONS

IN the preceding chapter I referred to the neglected condition of the children, partly due to the women's utter ignorance of hygiene and also to the fact that facilities for keeping themselves and their children clean are practically non-existent in Egyptian villages. My readers must bear in mind that all the water, for whatever purpose it may be required, has to be fetched by the women from the Nile, or a canal, or even some dirty pool, all of which may be situated at some distance from their homes. But the main reason for the children being so dirty is the belief in, and dread of, the evil eye, or eye of envy, which is to be found practically all over the world. It has not even died out in modern England, where, to my own knowledge, it exists in parts of the eastern counties, and it may possibly exist in other counties also. To the Egyptian peasants the fear of the evil eye is a very real terror from infancy to old age, and on that account it is considered unwise to let a child look too beautiful in case some one may cast the eye of envy over it. Certainly the dirt allowed to accumulate on some of these poor little specimens of humanity should afford a very effective protection against any and every evil eye!

To counteract this baneful influence innumerable methods are adopted, of which I will give a few examples.

If after a woman has received a visit from friends and neighbours her child shows signs of illness she immediately thinks that one of her guests has cast the evil eye on it. She accordingly cuts out a human figure in paper (Fig. 132), and then takes a pin, repeats the name of each of her late visitors in turn, pricking the paper figure at the mention of each name. When she has repeated all the names she sets the figure on fire, saying to her child, "Look at it, look at it!" When it is consumed, she takes a piece of alum, rubs it on the child's forehead, and then places it in a fire, over which she passes the child seven times. When the alum is burnt out, leaving only a charred substance, the mother takes it out of

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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the fire and stamps on it. After this, it is believed, the injury done to the child by means of the evil eye has been effectually counteracted, and it will get well again.

Another means of averting the evil eye is to throw dust after a person who is suspected of having cast a baleful glance as he or she went by in the street or on the road. Or, again, a piece of the outer garment of the suspected person is secretly cut off with a sharp knife and is put in a pottery saucer containing burning incense. This is waved in front of the person affected, so that the smoke may pass over him and counteract the malign influence. Another method is to break a piece of pottery behind the back of the person who is believed to possess the evil eye.

FIG. 132. PAPER FIGURES REPRESENTING A MAN (LEFT) AND A WOMAN (RIGHT), TO BE PRICKED WITH PINS AND THEN BURNT IN ORDER TO CURE A CHILD OF THE ILL EFFECTS OF THE EVIL EYE

Similar precautions are taken when animals are thought to have had the eye of envy cast upon them.

When I was residing in a small village in Middle Egypt the buffalo which produced my daily supplies of milk refused on more than one occasion to yield the necessary quantity for my morning meal. Its owners were convinced that this was due to the evil eye, so they put some fire in a pottery saucer, together with incense, and passed this seven times over the buffalo's head. Immediately after this the milk flowed, convincing them that they were right in their suspicion!

If a woman has a good-looking child, and visitors come to her house, she is careful to note if the child cries when they depart. If it does she then knows for certain that one or more of them has

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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cast the evil eye over it. To counteract this she will take as many small lumps of salt as there were visitors, and throw them one by one on the fire, which leaps up into flame each time. As the flames burst forth so, she believes, will the evil eye burst, and all harm caused by it be taken away from the child. This is a common practice among both Copts and Muslims all over Egypt.

Again, if a woman, whether Copt or Muslim, has a baby that is constantly crying she believes that it has had the evil eye cast over it. In order to dispel the mischief done, the child's grandmother (either paternal or maternal), keeping it well away from her body, carries it to the *zîr* (see p. 137), round which she passes it seven times. As she does this she repeats seven times, "O angel of the water, take away the evil eye from this child." Water being very valuable in Egypt, it is believed that every vessel containing it possesses a guardian angel of the water, and this angel, it is thought, will remove the ill effects of the evil eye from the child.

When admiring a child or any other of your neighbour's possessions, it is the correct thing to say, "*Mâ shâ' Allâh*" ("What God willeth is") or "*Ṣalla 'a 'n-Nebi*" ("Bless the Prophet"), in order that your praise may not be taken for envy and that there may be no suspicion that you are casting the evil eye upon the object of your admiration.

The first year that I lived in an Egyptian village I fell ill two or three times with fever. The villagers had never come into close contact before with any Englishwoman, and so every article of my dress was noticed and commented on, as well as my eyes, the colour of my cheeks, and so on. When riding through the village many kindly and complimentary remarks were made: "See, she has the eyes of a cat"—a great compliment, to the minds of the villagers—"How beautiful is the colour of her cheeks!" etc. When I fell ill the second time my attendant, a most faithful and devoted man, was convinced that it was entirely due to some one having cast the evil eye upon me. He therefore harangued the villagers, and told them that they were, of course, quite right to admire me, and that all that they said was true, but that in future such remarks were not to be made without one at least of the protecting phrases mentioned above. The consequence was that the next time I went out riding I was followed by a whole concourse of people, men, women, and children, all ejaculating as I

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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SUPERSTITIONS

passed, "*Mā shā' Allāh, mā shā' Allāh; ṣalla 'a 'n-Nebi, ṣalla 'a 'n-Nebi,*" as fast as they could speak.

Another year, when I was again visiting this village, I contracted a bad chill, accompanied by fever. Some of the village women insisted on seeing me, and, with many head-shakings, declared that it was the evil eye again, and in any case they must make the usual test to see. Alum was burned in a fire placed in a pottery saucer, and while it was burning it was carefully watched by my village friends. Alum, when thus being heated, forms a lot of little bubbles, which the peasants call 'eyes,' and the women watching this process remarked on the number of eyes that had been cast at me, and that it was no wonder I was ill. When the alum becomes a charred mass it is supposed to assume a male or female form. In this instance it assumed both, so it was decided that the harm done to me had been committed by both a man and a woman. Sometimes the alum, after being burned, is submitted to an old woman, who is supposed to be able to tell who the actual culprit is. After this test, in my case, several presents of incense were sent to me by my poor neighbours. The Coptic priest, then living in the desert monastery near by, also sent me some, which, he said, had been blessed in the church. All this incense was, at different times, burned in the room where I lay ill, the saucer in which it was burning being passed over me seven times. As I got decidedly better a day or two later it was, of course, credited to the incense, which had, so they believed, destroyed the harm done to me by the evil eye.

FIG. 133. NECKLACE WORN BY A YOUNG CHILD TO AVERT THE EVIL EYE

Blue beads, and necklaces made of them, are worn by women and children (Fig. 133) as protective charms against this supposed evil; and animals are decorated with blue cotton tassels and strings of beads, with the same end in view. Red is also an effective charm, and I have often noticed, as a string of camels has passed by me in the cultivation or in the desert, that the leading animal is wearing red tassels or blue beads, or both, round its neck. The

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Sheep are regarded as very gentle animals, and are supposed on that account to be watched over by angels, who, on hearing the child cry, will drive away the mother's *ḳarînah*, who has caused the illness by clutching at the child's throat.

If a boy or child under eight years of age cannot walk the mother believes that her *ḳarînah* has sent an *'afrît* into the child. To cure this infirmity she calls in a neighbour to help her. The mother seats the child on the ground, and places in its lap a number of dates and some *kishk*. The neighbour and child then go to the mosque, taking the dates and *kishk* with them. Friday is a favourite day for such a visit, and they arrange to arrive at noon, when the men are praying inside the building. The woman leaves the child seated outside the doorway, and herself retires to a short distance. When the people begin to come out of the mosque they see the dates and the *kishk* spread out on the child's dress, and they all scramble to get their share of them. This frightens the child, and it begins to scream. On hearing its cries the woman who brought it to the mosque goes and takes it up in her arms and carries it home.

It is believed that the screams of the frightened child will scare away the *'afrît* in its legs, and that after this it will be able to walk.

Christians employ the same cure for their children who are similarly affected, and, be it noted, take them to the mosque, not to the church. An old acquaintance of mine, who is a Copt, told me that a child of his was at one time unable to walk, but that it could do so after thus visiting the village mosque. He added that he had taken the child to several doctors in Cairo and Asyût, but that they had been unable to do it any good!

In a large town in Upper Egypt there are two mosques, in both of which there is an ancient pillar. People who are ill with jaundice go to either of these mosques and lick the pillar, and then, so I am informed, speedily recover. I visited one of the mosques and at once detected the ancient pillar, which stands in the main part of the building among the other pillars supporting the roof.

In Egypt, as in many other countries, hair-cuttings and -combings and nail-parings are carefully kept, for if anyone else obtained possession of them he would, by their means, be able to gain an influence over, and so injure, the original owners. Bones from which the meat has been eaten, skins of fruit, and the like are also, for the same reason, either carefully buried or burned in a fire.

F 755 [825] 796 794
F [853]
F 755 953 796 794
F 755 798
F 754

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
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Copts MR10

E

scripts, one of which he designates the "Book of Adam." He has with great labour collected and written out magical cures and protections for those troubled by *'afārīt*, and these form the contents of one of the books. He learnt his art, so he told me, from another magician, who was not a member of his family, but under whom he served a long apprenticeship. 791 789

F

During my sojourn in Egypt I have been given many accounts of the wonderful cures wrought by magicians on people possessed by *'afārīt*. I wrote the details down when they were given to me, and some of them may be interesting to my readers. The names of the people concerned, and the villages in which they live, are suppressed, in deference to their feelings; indeed, it would be a breach of confidence to divulge them. Such happenings are not usually discussed with foreigners, and were related to me only because I am regarded by the villagers as a trustworthy friend. 755 753 103

F

A young man in Upper Egypt became very angry with his wife one night while she was sitting in front of the fire cooking the evening meal. In his anger he took a pottery water-bottle (a *kulleh*) and struck her with it. In doing this he broke the bottle, and the water and some of the pieces of pottery fell into the fire, extinguishing it. The next moment he heard a voice saying to him, "You have broken the head of one of my children, so I will come into you [*i.e.*, possess you]." The man thereupon became mad, and began to tear his own face, and strike all those who came near him. Some of his relatives, seeing his terrible condition, proceeded to bind his hands behind his back and tie his feet together at the ankles, to prevent him doing further harm to himself or anyone else; but he continued to cry out and to speak meaningless words. His relatives took him to one doctor after another, but they could do him no good, and he continued in the same condition of violent madness. 593 152 776 152 158

F

At last, when he had remained in this state for three months, they went to see a certain sheikh. This man is a magician, and of a charitable character, and they begged him to cure the unfortunate man, pleading at the same time his poverty. The sheikh, who possesses (for he is still alive) many books of incantations and charms such as those mentioned above, listened sympathetically to their pleading, and consented to visit the sufferer, but he told them that they must first bring him a small piece of one of the garments belonging to the madman. They went home and 756 755

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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returned shortly with a piece of the material demanded, on which the sheikh wrote some magic words. After doing this he told the anxious relatives that the man was possessed by an *ʿafrīt*, and thereupon, according to his promise, accompanied them to the madman's house.

Here he found the patient lying on the ground covered with a blanket, with his hands tied behind his back and his feet bound together at the ankles with strong cords. The sheikh then started to burn incense in a dish and to read some of the incantations from one of his books. Whereupon the madman tore asunder the cords which bound him, and began to strike out right and left. When the sheikh asked him why he behaved in this way the *ʿafrīt*, speaking through the madman, replied, "You have an unclean woman in the room."[1] On hearing this the sheikh was very angry, for no unclean woman must ever be present on such an occasion. So he ordered all the people, and there were many present, to leave the room, with the exception of a few of the man's male relatives. Crowds always collect on the slightest excuse in all Egyptian villages, offering conflicting advice at the top of their voices. On such an occasion as this of the sheikh's visit to the madman the room where the patient lay would have been packed with sympathizers and eager sightseers.

When the crowd had been banished from the room the madman became quiet, and the sheikh continued to burn incense and to recite magic sentences. The sheikh finally told the *ʿafrīt* to leave the man, but he replied (of course speaking through the man), "From what part of his body shall I leave him? May I come out through one of his eyes, which will then become blind, as a punishment for his breaking the head of one of my children?" The sheikh replied that he would not permit him to do this, but that he was to come out of the big toe of one foot. The sheikh then placed a *ḳulleh* on the ground, and said to the *ʿafrīt*, "I shall know that you have left the man if you knock over this *ḳulleh*."

Presently, as he continued reading his incantations, the sheikh saw a few drops of blood fly from the man's big toe toward the *ḳulleh*, which was immediately flung with a crash against the wall. The madman then sat up and said, "Where am I? And who are you?" After a while he recognized all his relatives, whom he had not known during the whole period of his madness. They

[1] A menstruous woman is always regarded as unclean.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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associated in ancient than they are in modern Egypt, as is evident from Dr A. H. Gardiner's illuminating article, "Professional Magicians in Ancient Egypt."[1] It is interesting to note also that the two titles *swnw*, 'physician,' and *s'w*, 'amulet-man'—*i.e.*, 'maker' or 'purveyor of amulets'—are borne more than once by the same person.[2]

The necessity for a magician's being clean (p. 186) is strongly emphasized in ancient Egyptian magical texts.[3]

The modern belief that a person can be possessed by an *'afrīt* (pp. 231 f.) or a sheikh (pp. 187, 197 ff.) finds an ancient parallel in the tale of *The Daughter of the Prince of Bakhtan and the Possessing Spirit*.[4] The peacemaking feast held by people who have appeased the possessing sheikh (pp. 186, 199 f.) is likewise parallelled in the same story, where we are told [5] that the spirit, while agreeing to leave the princess, demanded that a feast-day be celebrated with him and with the chief of Bakhtan, a demand that was carried out.

The magical ceremony described on p. 188 began with the sweeping of the ground and the sprinkling of water.[6] In ancient Egypt the priest, before beginning the toilet episodes of the temple liturgy, swept the floor of the sanctuary with a cloth.[7] As the king (the high-priest *par excellence*) is shown in a relief in the temple of Derr [8] holding a ewer as well as the cloth used for sweeping the floor, it is highly probable that the priest often sprinkled the floor as well as swept it. It was certainly the custom to sprinkle water while the floor of a house was being swept, as we learn from a wall-painting found by Professor Petrie at el-'Amarneh.[9] With regard to the lighting of a fire and the burning of a hoopoo's feathers (p. 188), it should be pointed out that the ancient magicians also burned various strange substances while pronouncing their spells.[10]

[1] *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology*, vol. xxxix (1917), pp. 31 ff.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 33.
[3] A. M. Blackman, "Purification (Egyptian)," in Hastings, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 482.
[4] G. Maspero, *Popular Stories of Ancient Egypt* (London, 1915), pp. 172 ff.; J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records*, vol. iii, pp. 188 ff.
[5] J. H. Breasted, *op. cit.*, § 444.
[6] *Cf.* A. M. Blackman, "Purification (Egyptian)," in Hastings, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 482.
[7] A. M. Blackman, "Worship (Egyptian)," in Hastings, *op. cit.*, vol. xii, p. 778.
[8] A. M. Blackman, *The Temple of Derr* (Cairo, 1913), Pl. LXIV, left.
[9] W. M. F. Petrie, *Tell el Amarna* (London, 1894), Pl. V.
[10] F. Ll. Griffith and H. Thompson, *The Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden* (London, 1904), pp. 37 ff.

157 paper containing some powder and said, " I make plasters of this antidote (*tiriāḳ*), and place them upon the piles; then they are cured by the permission of Allah." I took a little of it between the tips of my fingers, and on examination found it to be orpiment (*rahg*) one of the compounds of deadly caustic arsenic (*zarnīkh*) which the common people call " ratsbane " (*samm al-fār*).[1]

" We took it, reckoning it pure gold, but the blacksmith's bellows revealed the vileness of the iron."

Anyone who has the least smattering of the science of medicine knows that this element is caustic. Barely have a few days passed after using it before a man endures considerable pain, and when he recognises the source of his mistake and the consequences of his foolish belief, he is filled with remorse.

VII

SUNSTROKE (BAṬḤAT—AL-SḪAMS)

153 THIS is cerebral congestion from the effect of the solar rays, and the manner of its treatment according to the method of
155 the " old wives " is, that the key of a door which faces towards the east, and is opened counter-clockwise is procured. (There must be found [p. 21] in every village at least one house fulfilling these two conditions). The " old woman " takes this key, procures woollen cords (or braces) and wraps them round the head of the patient, using the key which is in her other hand to accomplish this. In this way she keeps on bracing these cords until she can do no more. All this while the patient behaves like a bereaved woman, lamenting, and calling out, and crying for mercy, but there is none to pity. Next the " old woman " begins massaging the patient's head. I have seen her with my own eyes after all these operations, biting the skin of the patient's forehead between the eyebrows, in a fierce manner even to the effusion of blood. For she believes that the bones of the patient's head have become

[1] [Arsenic trisulphide. Tr.]

displaced, and that she can by such means put them into their place again.

VIII

"SPLITTING OF THE EYE" (BAZLAT-AL-'AIN)

THIS is used generally to mean chronic granular ophthalmia. Those afflicted employ for its cure a piece of fleshy red meat[1] which is hung in front of the afflicted eye or eyes.

I do not know any good this piece of meat does except that it quickly becomes a source of putrefaction, and a collector of the different morbid causes which lead to the complete loss of the patient's eye [p. 22].

IX

AMULETS[2]

THE common people constantly have recourse to those who monopolize the art of making amulets, in order to obtain help by their means when calamity troubles them and sickness makes them complain. Whenever a person is afflicted by some hysterical weakness or nervous disease, his relatives say of him that he is certainly bewitched, or in possession of a *jinnī*. They do not know even yet that sorcery and the interpenetration of bodies (by evil spirits) are absurd and falsified by all evidence. No intelligent person has ever accepted such things, unless what Hārūt and Mārūt[3] introduced in order to

[1] [Sometimes instead, a small bored red bead, usually a carnelian (*'aḳīḳ*) is suspended from the head of the sufferer. Tr.]

[2] [*Tamā'im*, plural of *tamīma*. Tr.]

[3] [These are the names of two rebellious angels of Babylon, who were noted magicians. According to the Koran, ii, 96, the devils at the time of King Solomon taught mankind sorcery "*and what had been revealed to the two angels in Babylon, Hārūt and Mārūt.*" The identification of the names is uncertain. They may be of Zoroastrian origin. Consult the *Encyclopedia of Islam, sub voce*; and Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 1926, pp. 146-8. Margoliouth (in the *Moslem World*, 1928, p. 74) endeavours to trace their names to the Jamnes and Mambres or Jannes and Jambres, the magicians of the time of Moses (2 Timothy III. 8), and of the N.T. Apocrypha (Gospel of Nicodemus v. 5). Tr.]

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890)

754 mislead people, as is revealed in the Noble Koran. And no
753 one can tell whether the people instructed by *Hārūt* and *Mārūt*
756 did not divulge this secret through the ages, until sorcery perished along with them, since it was difficult for them to put it into writing.

In the story of John Sīrāf [?] (جون سيراف),[1] the prince of sorcerers in the land of the English, who claimed that he was the successor (*khalīfa*) of *Hārūt* and *Mārūt*, there is much that will convince you of their errors and their lies. [p. 23.] For that person resided in an old castle, surrounded by trees thick with leaves, so that anyone beholding it is made to fancy that it is an ancient cavern over which the ages have passed. Sick people come to him and interview him in a large room, the walls of which are variegated with tapestry of a deep black colour, on which are outlined ugly-looking pictures, at which the joints of the body tremble. They think that they are in the Valley of the Jinn and the Devils. Before long the walls of this chamber split at the four corners, and those present then hear a terrible din, a little after which there are revealed men of ugly appearance and hideous shapes, with drawn swords in their hands. Then what sick person (or "bewitched" according to their opinion) would not be impressed by these phenomena, and his heart be perturbed with fear, due to the deceits of that scheming wretch, especially when the room, in spite of its being so spacious, is lit by a single candle?

Then the sorcerer takes the patient by himself into one of the small rooms from which the assistants have first gone out, and making him sit down, mutters over his head certain names and gibberish which he has fabricated. Next he puts the seal upon these absurdities by giving the patient water which he asserts has a secret power and a hidden influence, one of its peculiarities being that it expels the Jinn from the body and undoes the work of bewitchment. Such were his habits and practices until he heaped up great wealth and acquired large possessions. When he died last year (1891) leaving no heir, the government took over his belongings and gave them to almshouses, and objects of piety and benevolence.

[p. 24.] The North African (or Moorish) quacks have a ready

[1] [I have been unable to trace the source of this strange tale. Tr.]

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[p.24] The North African (or Moorish) quacks have a ready 756
market in Egypt because it is the common belief of the deluded people of that land that the Moors have great ability in casting out the Jinn from the bodies of mankind. I saw an example of this two years ago, when I was called in to treat a person [164] suffering from chronic meningitis. Whilst I was with him one day, suddenly those present stood up out of respect. I turned round to know the reason why, and beheld a man, a Moor with a long beard, of a ghastly colour and squalid appearance. He had entered the room, and those present were going up to him and kissing his hand to obtain a blessing thereby. I asked who he was, and was informed that he was Al-Ḥāgg Muḥammad of Tlemcen, and that he had been brought in in order to 755
drive out the accursed devil that had entered into the body of this poor wretch, and had made him toss upon a bed of pain and suffering.[1] When I heard this, I said, Allah help us! The Moorish Shaikh then took something out of his bag and threw it into a flaming fire, which they brought him at his request. At once there went up a smoke which almost choked the bystanders. Those who feared for their lives went out of the room, and contented themselves with watching from the door what else might happen. I myself remained, I am glad to say, with the others inside. I saw him after this incensing " operation " arise and approach the patient, and tie one of his big toes with a thread of silk, the end of which he himself held in his hand. Next he began saying to those present, " Verily the *jinnī* which is in the patient, is one of the 755
children of the unbelieving kings, and he will only go out from 776
the body by being condemned and despised and ill-treated. [753]
So it is you, who are here present, who must beat him." He pointed to the sick patient, and two of those present [p. 25] procured pieces of cane, bared their forearms and began beating him furiously, whilst he was crying for mercy and groaning. And the wonder of it was that the father of the poor fellow, who had up till then been treating him with clemency and gentleness, was one of the two who undertook to expel the *jinnī* from the body of the patient, although if they had only known it they were really trying to drive the

[1] [The term generally used to describe such a person is *mu'afrit*, which means possessed by an evil spirit, or *'afrit*. Tr.]

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the effect anticipated from it will depart without avail. For a certain friend, whom I know, they wrote an amulet which did not produce the desired result, in spite of his strict adherence to their wishes. (This was only that Allah might reveal to him their falsehood and wickedness.) It so happened that when this friend was in despair he exercised his skill on the covering of the talisman, which was [p. 38] of lead, until he opened it. When the paper inside it appeared, he found it did not contain anything at all in the way of writing. Yet he did not cease in his mind to place some credence in the soundness of amulets and talismans, for when he saw that the circumstances were such, he was afraid in his mind lest the writing had flown away because he desired an acquaintance with what was inside it, and so he did not stop performing the requirements prescribed to him by the quacks. What added to his hallucination was the fact that he told his case to an ignoramus, led astray like himself, and he began upbraiding him for what he had done, and proved to him that no one dared to do what he had done unless he had been blinded, and the sign-posts of his vision had been effaced.

Let us return to the shell-diviners. These women do not confine themselves merely to enticing people into their nets in the normal way, but they vie with one another in practical "healing." They have thus often been the cause of the setting of the sun of life for many persons of note both men and women. One, whose word I cannot doubt, informed me that he was inhabiting a neighbouring dwelling in which was a girl suffering from chlorosis ("*yellowness*" [sic]) whose mother went to one of the shell-diviners and informed her of her daughter's condition. The "old wife" assured her that a *jinnī* had fallen in love with her daughter, and had entered into every part of her body and was the cause of her complaint.

When our poor friend heard that, she could not resist throwing herself at the feet of the "old wife," beseeching her to take pity and cast out the *jinnī*. After pretending to refuse and put difficulties in the way, the "old wife" at length granted her request, and accompanied her to her dwelling. As soon as she saw the patient [p. 39] she ordered them to bring her half a pound of metallic lead and melt it over a fire. When

Barrenness, they believe, sometimes arises also from the entering in unto the mother of a woman who has weaned her child. The " cure " in this case, according to their statement, is for the barren woman to carry a rag of wool wet with the milk of a woman who has recently weaned her child.

XXIII

THE ḲARÎNA

THE Bedouins name this the " Heat " (*Ḥarāra*). This name is used generally for the class of diseases of the throat (the original symptom of which is difficulty in breathing) such as diphtheria (*ḵhunnāḳ*) and convulsion and drying up of the uvula, and the like. The " prescriptions " of the " old wives " are self-contradictory in regard to its " cure." Some of them think that the correct thing is cauterisation [p. 49] of the child upon its frontal and terminal crown (*yāfūḵh*). The child, however, finds relief from their folly, inasmuch as there is soon set up inflammation of the brain (meningitis), of which it dies.

" And he who does not die of cautery will die of something else ;
The " prescriptions " are many but the death is one."

Others again hold to the belief in replacing the cauterisation by scarifying with a razor instead, on both sides (front and back). This is the method followed by the Bedouin. The Arabs of Mariūṭ and al-Ḥāgir instead of all these, bore two holes in the child's ears through which they pass a thread of red silk. The " old wives " have different absurd theories as to the cause of this disease in children. Some of them claim that every male child has a sister (*ukḵht*) among the Jinn,

4: Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 (ca. 1890) MR13 Fellahin MR13

and every female child a brother (*akhkh*);[1] and since the sister loves her brother, this Jinn sister tries to destroy her real brother so that she may enjoy his love. And that is why whenever a mother curses her son she says to him *Habbatak ukhtak* (*may your sister love you*).[2] The only object in cauterizing the child, or scarifying his head with a razor, is to punish him so that his sister may have pity on him and betake herself to her lover among the Jinn that he may leave him to them. Another group assert that " the Mother of Screeching " [*Umm Kuwaik*] (i.e. the owl) was in former times a human being, and had a child with whom she was once enraged, so that she beat him so violently and painfully that he died. Then Allah punished her for that, for He changed her from human to animal form, and she has ever since so remained, enraged against the human race from which she was driven out [p. 50], and whose ruin she is constantly endeavouring to bring about, in that at sunset she passes above children, spreading her wings over them and smiting them with this disease. Some people say that one day a certain holy man struck the owl on the head with his hand to make it cease injuring people, but it would not be corrected, and that the black lines on her head are the marks of the fingers of that good man after the blow.

This practice resembles what the people of the Times of Ignorance[3] used to believe long ago in regard to the *Hāma* (a kind of owl), that when the blood of any slain person remained unavenged, there went out from his brow a *Hāma* which kept on screaming out: " Give me to drink of the slayer's blood." As the poet says:

" Oh, 'Amr neglect not my protecting and my wrong, else will I beat thee till the owl cry, ' Give me to drink.' "

[1] [Miss Blackman, *op. cit.* pp. 74–75, is seemingly wrong when she states that there is no brother (*akhkh*). Tr.]

[2] [This is another instance of the extensive belief in the *Karina* (see above p. 44). Dr. Klunzinger (formerly physician at Kosseir on the Red Sea coast) in his work, *Upper Egypt, its People and its Products* (London, 1878), deals with popular medicine on pp. 397–400. On. p. 383 he writes, " Even in the official registers of deaths kept by the physicians the *karina* was till lately a regular variety of disease, exactly corresponding to our convulsions." Tr.]

[3] [The *Jāhiltya*, or Pre-Islamic days. cf. *Acts of the Apostles*, xvii, 30. Tr.]

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 (ca. 1890) MR13 Fellahin MR13 EGYPT MR1

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drugs, salts and acids and alkalis with labels, on which were written their names in Latin; in very indistinct letters on account of their age. The bystander could not help suspecting that this was merely the leavings of some pharmacist, which this man had bought up after the death of the owner.

On turning my head to the right I saw written on one of these bottles " sulphuric acid," so I asked his lordship about the contents of the bottle, in order to try him, that it might put an end to my suspicions regarding him. He answered straightway, " This is oil of mandragora, or apples of the Jinn." Then he produced a vessel gilded on the outside and said, " This is the *Kohl* (stibium) of the Forty. It puts and end to obscuration of the surface of the eye, and I produced it myself by boiling it in oil of rose mixed with the grease of serpents forty times." He generously presented each of us with some to experiment with, but when we had left his dwelling we threw what was in our hands on the ground, except one of us who was determined to try it. He put a little of it in his eye, and the next day was afflicted with ophthalmia of the cornea which took him fifteen days' treatment to get over its evil effects.

Mark the difference, O you who are intelligent and skilful, between the dwelling of this ignoramus aping the physician and [p. 61] the clinic of one of our keen native doctors. You will find the difference distinctly visible. While the former rejoices in success and prosperity, the latter suffers ill-luck and neglect.

XXX

HEADACHE (ṢUDĀ')[1]

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THIS is applied to many illnesses, but is only rarely an original illness. It arises from decay in the bone of the occiput,

[1] [Professor E. G. Browne, in his Fitzpatrick Lectures on *Arabian Medicine* mentions (p. 4) that this noun of pain appears in the Latin version of the Kānūn of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) as Soda (*Sermo universalis de Soda*), a term which must have bewildered those without the Arabic original. Tr.]

or from inflammation in the nerves. For that reason there are few who do not complain of it every day. As the numbers of the afflicted increase so, proportionately, do the methods of the quacks in claiming to "cure" it. One way, which I know by personal experience, is the "beating" of the temple-vein. They mean by this the "cutting" of the temple-vein [with a razor][1] because this is the place where one feels the pain more than any other. The fame of a barber in the villages depends on his skill in the "cutting" of the vein. A man, called Shurbagī, on the estate of Yūsuf Pāshā Kemāl in the district of Shubrakhīt has a monopoly of the "beating of the vein." For that reason the unfortunate from all villages make for him, pouring in to him from every quarter. He has fixed his fee for "beating the vein" at one dollar for each poor person whom this ailment has driven to him; while the rich pay according to their appearance and as they wish (for there is no way of stopping the generous). The belief in the efficacy of this "cure" for *Ṣudā'* by "cutting the temple vein" is widespread in a like degree in the small villages and large towns of Egypt. I have seen in the year [p. 62] just passed, in the Ḳaṣr al-'Ainī Hospital, more than six persons *in extremis* through loss of blood due to an "operation" of this kind, not to mention those who will have died before they could be brought in, or who fainted through heart weakness.

When the whole corporation of barbers was hostilely attacking the temple-vein, it said to them what has been said very appropriately:

"Someone else did wrong and I am tormented for your sake,
Just as if I were the forefinger of the penitent."[2]

Those who are accustomed to have recourse to cutting the vein as a "cure" for *Ṣudā'* will find in fact a temporary relief after this "operation," resulting from the dulling of sensation due to the loss of a large amount of blood by effusion; but when the blood supply returns and the patient recovers his wonted health he suffers violent pains and cruel aches once more.

[1] [For an actual photographic illustration of this "operation" see Miss Blackman, *op. cit.*, p. 214. Tr.]

[2] [When a man is sorry for some action he may bite his finger in remorse. The finger is bitten though it was not to blame. Similarly with the temple-vein. Tr.]

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XXXI

SCIATIC NERVE ('IRḲ AL-INS)

By this they mean sciatica (*'irḳ al-nisā*), or nervous pains chiefly in the hip. The causes of this disease are many, such as hereditary venereal disease (which is cured by its own medicines) and the effect of cold and inflammation in the sciatic nerve, or inflammation of the spinal cord.

[p. 65.] One of those who were famous for the " treatment " of this disease was a man of the people of Edkū [near Alexandria in Lower Egypt]. He takes his patient in the early morning outside the town until they come to a wide plain in which the box-thorn[1] grows. (It is a kind of shrub). He then chooses as much of it as equals the size of the patient's side, and recites over it charms[2] which he keeps on repeating for a long time. After that he scrapes aside the sand which surrounds its root, and when it is uncovered, he pulls it up. He next goes to a fire, which he had previously kindled, and in which are iron pins. He then begins cauterizing the bush in every one of its joints while all the time he is busily reciting. At the end of all these processes, he digs up some earth, buries the shrub, and the patient is " cured."

The explanation given of these " cures " is that sciatica is a disease due to the influence of the *Jinn*, and the charming drives out the *jinnī* from the body of the patient, and imprisons him in the shrub, while the cauterizing of this kills him inside it. It is marvellous that persons of any enlightened intelligence should absolutely refuse the treatment of physicians and betake themselves to this man who is just like all other quacks. He orders the patient not to publish the secret, for if he do, the disease will return worse than before. I was told this story by a friend who was thrown into this man's hands by fate. And the extraordinary [p. 66] part of the story is that imagination had obtained such a hold over him on account of

[1] [Arabice, *'ausag*, Latine, *Ausegum*. See M. Steinschneider, *Heilmittelnamen der Araber*, in *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, xii, 222. Tr.]

[2] ['*Azā'im*, plural of '*Azīma*.]

his having divulged the secret to me that in two days after this, the disease returned to him through imagination, just as it had left him under the same influence.

XXXII

"NECK PAIN" (WAG' AL-RAḲABA)

THIS means either hoarseness of the throat or diseases of the tonsils (lōzatēn). The "old wives" "cure" it in two ways. (1) They make the patient hang round his neck a huge bead of red stones, and (2) they order him to swallow a boiled hen's egg at one gulp without chewing. The harm of this latter method will appear from the story reported by the Egyptian newspapers of date 13th November, 1892, about a youth in the Daḳahlīya [Province] in whose throat the egg stuck and he died shortly after. Perhaps this will be a warning to those who are heedless and restrain them from trusting in the nonsense of the "old wives" and the absurdities of foolish individuals.

XXXIII

WORM EXTRACTORS (DAWWĀDA)

THESE are a community—the Ghagar and Nawar[1]—whose origin is from Syria; some say from China; and some go so far as to say that they are spread all over the world. They claim that they can "cure" children who cry too much, by extracting the worms (*dūd*) from their foreheads, pretending that this is the cause of their continual crying. Dr. Muḥammad Efendī 'Alī Duwaidār relates that a little child of his family was always crying, so the child's parents summoned

[1] [Gypsies and vagrants. See *Encyclopedia of Islam*, under, *Nūrī*. Tr.]

the *Dawwād* ("*worm-extractor*") to "cure" him. These are his words: Whilst I was in the dwelling, this man arrived, and I wished to witness his "operation" myself, only that, before he should direct his attention to the child, according to his wont, I directed my attention to what was in his hand before the beginning of the "operation." I found in it a quantity of cheese worms. When he felt that his trickery was exposed and that he was openly disgraced, he sought safety in flight."[1]

XXXIV

WORMS IN THE EYE (DŪD AL-'AIN)

ANOTHER crowd of quacks extract worms from the eye. Most of these worm-extractors are women to whom silly creatures come complaining of cracking of the eye and heaviness of the eyelid. They have already a confused idea that the pain they feel is due to "worms in the eye," whereas in most cases it is nothing but granular ophthalmia.[2] The "operation" is as follows: The "doctress" in spite of the patient's dislike, brings a piece of sugar and, turning back the eyelid of the poor creature, rubs the inside with it, until the fleshy part becomes rubbed away and sticks to the sugar, assuming the appearance of worms.

There is no concealing the dangers of this "operation"; one being the sticking of the eyelids to the ball of the eye. Many women have lost their sight by this ineffective treatment. Perhaps the harm and injury which overtook them may be a warning and admonition to others, so that no one will consent to the absurdities of such imposters.

We counsel people not to accept the "treatment" of the Ghagar [Gypsies] nor to pay attention to their judgments and

[1] [A photographic illustration of such a "cure" will be found in Miss Blackman, *op. cit.*, p. 212. Tr.]

[2] [Trachoma, Arabice, *ramad ḥubūbī* (sic). Dr. Sharaf gives *ḥabībī*. Tr.]

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 (ca. 1890) MR13 Fellahin MR13 Libyan Bedouin MT9

for the space of forty days. The true reason for this the ancients did not know (or if they knew it, they did not speak about it, or it did not reach us). But the erudite Pasteur says that in this space is the crisis in which the invalid is between the two states of recovery and danger.

XXXVI

THE ZĀR

(We do not know the true etymology of the word Zār, whether from Zārā, a town in the North of Īrān; or from Zār, an Arab village East of Yemāma. Most take it from *Ziyāra* [visitation], meaning thereby the coming of the "Masters"[1] into the presence.)

Fortune did not grant us to be eye-witnesses of the ceremony of the Zār so that we might speak of it at first hand, since the Kūdīyāt[2] object to the presence of men or even boys, so we relate this on the authority of the famous authoress [p. 73] Zainab Efendi Fawwāz. It was published in No. 200 of the valuable *Nile Journal* (*Jarīdat-al-Nīl*).[3] She says:

"There is a company of women called Kūdīyāt. They are those who practice the Zār. Such women are the most undesirable and most wicked of charlatans, for they are female quacks. They do things which souls loathe, and at which bodies shudder. As for the women who agree with them they almost worship them on account of the powers to which they lay claim. They even go so far as to believe that if any woman speak in her own home, the *Kūdīya* will hear in her own dwelling. The reason for this is, that the *Shaikh* or the *'Afrīt* [or demon] who possesses the *Kūdīya*, transmits the words to his devotee. For this reason the woman cannot speak, nor if

[1] [i.e. the presiding women who are "possessed" by male spirits. Tr.]
[2] [The chief women of the party (*ṭā'ifa*) of the Zār, or rulers of its meetings (*agwāḳ*, plural of *gōḳa*).]
[3] [See M. Hartmann: *op. cit.*, *index*.]

the *Kūdīya* demands anything, can she contradict her, lest the Grand *Shaikh*, under whose jurisdiction the demons [or *'Afārīt*] are, may be angry. And so the woman comes to her husband with bashfulness or with abuse, and if she is able to wheedle anything from him she does so. If not, she must sell something of her own property, and put a stop to the demands of the *Kūdīya*, somehow or other. If she should demand of one of them the performance of the *Zār*, the expenditure will not fall short of twenty or thirty guineas, not to mention trinkets, ornaments, and valuable garments which the *Kūdīya* asks from her, with the statement that the *'Afrīt* [or demon] has come to her in a vision and demanded of her such and such. So the woman is compelled to yield to the demand for fear that he will cross her and cast her into sickness."

"Now I shall explain to my gentle readers what I have actually seen myself [p. 74]. On one occasion one of my lady friends invited me to visit her on a particular day because she would perform the *Zār*, and I was most anxious to witness it. I had never seen it, though I had heard about it. When I entered the place I found a wide court spread with a large carpet, and along its sides rugs thrown upon the ground, so that no part was above the other. This was out of respect for the *Kūdīyāt*, who do not like to sit on couches, nor may anyone sit above them. This is done out of obedience to "Religion," seeing that their belief is that what they do is in accordance with the text of the Divine Law, which just shows the ignorance of these women and their not studying the facts, for they know nothing of their Religion except the names of Saints like *Bedawī*, *Rifā'ī*, *Bayūmī*, *Mutawellī*, and other such names.[1] So if one of them has the least ailment, the *Kūdīya* makes her imagine that *Sīdī Bedawī* or some other will come to her. And everyone knows how much the imagination influences the feelings. So the women seek "blessing" from her, and come to her from all sides, reckoning the honouring of her one of the chief requirements of religion, because there dwells in her body the pure *Sīdī Bedawī*, or *Shaikh Muḥammad*, or

[1] [*Bedawī* is the celebrated saint of Ṭanṭā, in the Delta; *Rifā'ī* is buried in Cairo near the Citadel. *Bayūmī* is buried at Huseinīya near 'Abbāsīya, Cairo; *Mutawellī* is the famous *Kuṭb* (or "*Pole*") of the *Ṣūfīs* and is supposed to manifest his presence behind the *Bāb al-Zuwaila* in Cairo. Tr.]

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890)

for her the usual mode, and she was jumping about like a child until it was finished. Then the spirit went out of her to his mother. After him came in the slave whose name is Murgān[1] and began speaking in the jargon of slaves, and dancing according to his customary mode. He at length went away and the slave-woman, his spouse [the Sitt Rīḥāna], came in and adorned herself, and stood in the midst of the hall, and screamed in a frightsome manner, and said, 'I will not cook save with the silver spoon (*maghrifa*) nor will I content myself with other than the silver roller (*gandara*). And if you do not bring them to me, I will blind her and cast upon her a disease, and will not let her rise up from the earth.' Then all the ladies rose from every side and surrounded her, each one kissing her hands, and coaxing her to forgive them, which only made her more refractory and terrifying until the chief *Kūdīya* rose and made her agree to come again the following week.

[p. 78.] "At this point I asked one of the ladies at my side, 'What is this body that contains this family even to the slaves and handmaidens; and where were they formerly? And why were the man and his wife and child not present together, and the slaves standing to wait on them?' When the lady heard what I said, she stared at me in astonishment, and said, 'Be quiet, lest the Lords be angry. (Pardon, oh, my Lords!)' Then I said, 'I did not mean that. I only wanted information. Why does she not do like the rest and return whence she came?' She said, 'The devotee worked for them the necessary things except for this Lady Rīḥāna. She did nothing for her, so the latter is very angry. (Allah be praised, oh, my Lady Rīḥāna.)'

"Afterwards food was brought to which the mistress of the *Zār* very cordially and politely invited the guests, after which they all departed pleased and grateful."

"Healing" by means of the *Zār*[2] acquired some fame when

[1] [This is the celebrated servant of the Jinn. The name means "coral."]

[2] [The nearest analogy to it is the Black Mass in Christendom or perhaps Voodooism. For further information consult P. Kahle: *Zār-Beschwörungen in Egypten* (in *Der Islam*, 3, 1912, pp. 1–41; 189–190; 318); also the *Moslem World*, 1913, pp. 275–289. In 1931 at the Exhibition of Modern Art in Cairo, there was on view an interesting oil painting by an Egyptian lady artist depicting part of the Zār ceremony. Tr.]

4: Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 (ca. 1890) MR13 Fellahin MR13

it was taken up by a society in Europe. But the truth is clear that those who thus imitated the "old wives" of Egypt were only seeking after some new and wonderful thing so that people might make a fuss about them. They were denounced by the scientific world of Europe, until they desisted from their error.

XXXVII

"THORN OF THE WIND" SHŌKAT-AL-RĪḤ

THIS is a name used generally in the villages for decay (caries) of the bones of the phalanges of the foot or hand, and the accompaniment of this decay with violent inflammation and great swelling. Many people in Buḥaira (Province) have become famous for "curing" it, the best known of them being the Shaikh 'Abd al-Ḥamīd. He has two "treatments" for this, one, old, namely, that the finger of the patient should be burnt with a circular cauterization; the other, new, namely, that the sinews of the muscles should be cut and rooted out along with a part of the substance of the fingers. It is asserted that this latter "method" makes a more radical cure than the former because it is in agreement with modern science. The harm is not confined, however, to the cutting and rooting out of the sinews, but his recommendation to the patient not to wash his wound with water [p. 80] saying that water is "the poison of wounds."

Some people employ a poultice of doves' dung, as I saw last year, for a youth presented himself to me during my stay in the provinces, and on examination I found the nail-phalanx necrotic. So I extracted it and he was well after a few days, though he had remained for sixty days before having it out, enduring in it all kinds of torment.

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890)

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XXXVIII

SKIN DISEASES AND SNAKE-CHARMERS

THE common people think that *impetigo* or skin-disease (*karfa*) originates from the fact that the viper blows its poison into the body. For that reason those afflicted betake themselves to the snake-charmers [Rifā'ī Dervishes] and the viper-enchanters [Sa'danī Dervishes].[1] As for the latter, they are the lowest roughs who claim that they have complete authority over serpents and vipers. So they charm by means of oil, that is, they spit into it, and anoint the patient with this oil for the space of three days. Then he is "cured." And it is [p. 81] a vain assertion and worthless belief because scientific and practical experiments prove that the poison of these reptiles does not cause harm except when it touches the blood. The savant Bouchard swallowed capsules containing large quantities of it. They were very nourishing. It is mentioned that the degree of their nourishment was like that of the white of eggs.

And if we see the oil of the charmers sometimes benefiting in the case of *karfa*, that is only because this disease, like some skin diseases, demands for its successful treatment extreme caution against atmospheric injuries, that is, the influence of the outside air. When oil is smeared on, the layer of smearing forms a sort of barrier between them. So no wonder the patient is cured and relieved from the fetter of the disease. For the oil in this case produces softening in the crusts of the skin-disease, then they fall off of themselves. And it is not, as the *Sa'danī* and other triflers assert that this results from their control over serpents. Because if they were speaking the truth, why do they let the serpents injure people at all, and harm mankind with their ill-doing?

[1] [See article by translator on *The Gypsies of Modern Egypt* in the *Moslem World*, July, 1933, p. 289.]

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XXXIX

[p. 82.] THE "FEAR" CUP (ṬĀSAT-AL-TARBA)

THEY say that if there befall a man what throws into his heart nervousness and terror, there is no escape from his being struck either, with venereal disease [*zuhrī*] (there is no need to expose the lies of these folk, since it is generally accepted that venereal disease is contagious and never arises from imagination), or, *yaraḳān* ("jaundice") (which they use generally as a name for nervous diseases). And the "cure" for both of these afflictions is that water should be placed in the "*Fear*" *Cup*.[1] It is a vessel of brass engraved with the figures of birds or inscribed with obscure writings, and after it is exposed to the dew by night, the invalid drinks it and is "cured."

One curious thing is that there is found suspended round the border of the cup forty pieces of brass engraved like the foregoing, and when one of these pieces is lost, there is lost with it the benefit which was to be expected from the taking of the water placed in the cup. I have asked many people about this folly and they have replied: "We found our ancestors doing this and we are driven to do likewise."

The real cause of the disease. It is now established that venereal disease is a disease that is contagious, and not produced of itself, but by inheritance from forebears, or the result of secret contact. So that this false opinion is invalidated.

But these influences are the result of fear and perhaps they

[1] [The following is a rough description of this type of medicine bowl from one in the possession of the translator (plate 3). The dimensions of the bowl are 7½ ins. in diameter and fully 2 ins. in height. The inner cup is 2¼ ins. in diameter and 1¼ in. in height. Round the rim of the inner cup are twenty little holes, from which are suspended forty keys, two from each hole. Each key bears an inscription on each side. These are not easily decipherable, but appear to be some of the *Asmā' al-ḥusnā*, or *most beautiful names of Allah*. A common one is *Ghafūr* (the forgiver). By loosening the central screw the inner cup with its keys may be turned round to any part of the bowl. The inscriptions are too long to translate here. Besides containing well-known passages from the *Koran*, there are likewise pious exclamations and invocations of the archangels, such as, oh Gabriel! (*Yā Gibr'īl*), oh Michael! (*Yā Mīkā'īl*) oh 'Azra'īl, etc. On the extreme edge of the bowl there are what appear to be numbers of magical import. A slightly different example is illustrated by Zwemer in his *Influence of Animism on Islam*, p. 180. Tr.]

cause other diseases of a nervous character which are feared especially by the young. And since that is only the result of frightening children with the dark, and with Jinn and the bogey man[1] and other [p. 83] absurdities such as ignorant mothers tell to their children, frightening and terrifying them, the cure for the resultant ills is to eradicate the ignorance of the mothers by education, a thing which is still considered a sin in the East.

XL

INCENSING (TABKHĪRA)

" AND for Syphilis (*tashwīsh*) they ' prescribed ' incensing,
Which an " old wife " among them of the tribe of Basūs prepares.
She recites over it the [Koranic] section of *Iblīs* [=the Devil]
As if Death sent her to go to and fro.
How much money was given for its fabrication ?
How many souls have been disgusted by its fumigation ?
And does their ' incensing ' with vermilion (*zungafr*)
Cure a sick person, when there is decay in the skeleton ? "

Some of the " old wives " in the provinces were famed in past ages for their " cure " of venereal disease by " incensing." It is an ancient practice in the villages until to-day it has attained to such a degree of imagination that the villagers apply the censer (*mabkhara*) to every serious disease, be it V.D. or not.

I witnessed that myself once. An " old wife " came to " incense " a man who had been sick for a long time, and his relatives were bewildered about his disease (because they would not go to a physician) and in fact, he was suffering from retention of urine due to stone. The patient died with the assistance of the " incensing " of the " doctress."

[1] [Literally, the man with (or the father of) the skinned leg (*Abū rigl maslūkha*). This bogey corresponds to our Devil on Two Sticks (= Diable Boiteu = Asmodeus, Prince of Demons). See my article in *Folk-Lore*, vol. xxxviii, 4 (Dec., 1927), p. 377. Tr.]

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XLIII

THE HORN OF THE RHINOCEROS AND POISONS

ALL internal diseases for which the "old wife" is not enabled to perfect a trick to impose on the intellects of the people of the provinces, she attributes in her diagnosis to *Sukwa* [see below]. She says to the patient: "Oh, my son, you have *Sukwa* and nothing will be of any avail except the horn of the rhinoceros, which must be placed in a china vessel and exposed to the dew all night and drunk upon an empty stomach in the morning."

Now the "horn of the rhinoceros" (*ḳarn al-ḵẖartīt*) consists of pieces of the horns of cows or of buffaloes. Pilgrims or merchants from the Sudan bring them and spin the tale how that they are the antidote (*tiriāḳ*) for poisons. Whereas even if they were rhinoceros horns, as they assert, there are no special beneficial qualities in them at all, as far as we know. But it is well known that the volatile salts of the English are extracted from the horns of the hart, or [p. 87] mountain buck, but that is not the rhinoceros. Whereas if we imagined, as they do, that these two are one and the same, they would not have brought a conclusive proof, since on their putting the horn in water the salt in it does not melt so as to be of benefit. But what we do know is that the volatile salts of the English are no good in counteracting poisons (except alcoholic poisoning or intoxication).

It is well-known that the word *Sukwa* is applied generally to pulmonary consumption accompanied by loss of blood on coughing. The patient must be well-fed, and guarded as much as possible from cold. He must leave the place where he caught it for dry warm places, and keep away from crowds and not neglect moderate exercise. And let his people guard against allowing him to spit upon articles or on the ground. (For if they knew that the poison that the "old wife" shuns is expectorated with the saliva, and that healthy people breathe it and fall into the clutches of Death, they would beware of the evil consequences. So let them know that it is one of the most

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890)

164 violent of contagious diseases and the hardest to cure). Therefore let them have him spit into a handkerchief or a piece of linen, which is then dipped in tar and afterwards burned.

His relatives should call in a doctor to visit him. It is well known that menfolk do not reckon themselves ill unless they are confined to their rooms and unable to stir out of doors, that is, when the illness has become chronic and incurable. Whereas if it had been receiving attention it would not have been thus, except after a very long time, and at the beginning it would have been possible to repel it with ease. Frequently we have seen people suffering from pulmonary consumption, and in spite of that [p. 88] the answer of one of them to us when we asked him about his disease, was: "Allah forbid, I am not diseased." But before long we see the disease contradicting him, and he is confined to his house. And most of them are fated to die of these diseases for this reason.

It is encumbent on those who are consumptive to attend to the disease at the outset. But I fancy them saying, "And where can we find a doctor to consult every time; the cities are distant, and perhaps we go to consult a doctor and can't find him." I say, it is an easy matter. If the people of the villages desire to have a special doctor for themselves to cure them gratis, without their going to him, and to be at their command, they have only to take the trouble to ask him from the Government on condition that each one of them pays one millième per month (as His Excellency 'Alī Mubārak Pāshā reckoned) and as we demonstrated more than once in the well-known newspaper *al-Mu'ayyad*.[1]

XLIV

PAIN OF THE SHIḲḲA

164 THIS is generally applied to diseases of the spinal marrow and colic of the stomach and kidneys. They "prescribe" for the sick that two men should carry him by the head and feet

[1] [See Hartmann: *op. cit. index.*]

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at them an instant. A second later one of the bulls was choked and the plough broken. Then al-Sa'dāwī [this was his name] called to him, "Woe to you, O Jafīla! Could you not find someone else to afflict to-day with the blade of your envy? Off with you, for I will retaliate upon you." He did not postpone his threat long, for the fire of envy enraged him. In the evening he went to the enclosure of his fellow "craftsman," but did not find him there. Instead he found a bull which he stared at with his eyes. Instantly the bull fell down, and al-Sa'dāwī thereupon withdrew. When Jafīla arrived and his people told him about it, he asked them, "Was al-Sa'dāwī present?" Consider these two fools!

And because of the prevalence of this matter in the provinces you can see many illnesses, even wide-spread fevers, ascribed to "Envy." To "cure" this the "old wife" betakes herself to charm the patient, and kindles a fire on which she throws pieces of *shabb* (one of the compounds of Alumina) and *fasūkh* (sweet-smelling pine-resin) or *jāwī*.[1] Then when the *shabb* melts upon the fire it evaporates and some of the vapours become polluted with its elements and assume various forms. The "old wife" says that they are the representation of a woman or a man, according to her fabrications. [A fuller account than this is given by Lane in his *Modern Egyptians*, chapter XI, page 257 (Everyman Edition). Tr.]

[p. 97.] (Cases in point). The "old wife" once fumigated a young man. When she had blown up the alum (*shabb*) she pointed to it as the image of a woman whose name she mentioned, and who was well-known in their village for "envy." Thereafter she took a pin and stabbed it into the image saying, "May God put out her eye!"

By a strange happening the woman, noted for her envy, came to the young man (who was a physician) complaining of ophthalmia. Someone told her that the old "fumigating" wife had stabbed a pin in the eye of the image and mentioned her name. Then the silly woman imagined that the ophthalmia had only arisen because of that, and went off to raise her plaint. From her imaginings she created realities for which she began

[1] [i.e. benzoin. The more correct name is *lubān jāwī*, i.e. Javanese frankincense. Tr.]

4: Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890)

claiming payment. Had it been in the past centuries, people would have retaliated on the "old wife." (May Allah wage war upon Ignorance!)

To protect camels from "envy," an old shoe is hung upon its temple, but I do not know the reason for this.

On the breast of a horse the tooth of a hyena is hung. This old absurdity is the custom current amongst horse-fanciers, of bedecking their steeds with this tooth which they reckon the greatest of ornaments.

On a donkey a wolf's tooth is hung.

Children have put in their hair a piece of *fāsūkh* or *jāwī*, and they hang upon their necks pieces of the bones of the eagle, or of any animal of prey, along with some shells.

It happens sometimes on a day that a milch cow refuses its milk because of some disease or other cause. So the "old wife" announces [p. 98] to them that it is "envied" and orders the placing of its halter in a forsaken grave until the cow gives milk.

As for our discourse on envy, if we suppose it to be true, then what happens daily in the provinces is not of that nature. On the contrary, they are symptoms of various diseases such as we have previously diagnosed. In most cases they are marsh fevers which arise from the water-courses and swamps surrounding the villages, and which, in the time of ploughing, are very common, especially after irrigation and the ploughing of the wheat and clover land, owing to the great putrefaction of the vegetable refuse on the land.

As for getting rid of swamps, that is a matter entrusted to the intelligent members of the community who apprehend the destruction of their own health and that of their children. In ploughing it is necessary for ploughmen to take a good square meal before undertaking the work, and to protect their heads from the influence of the sun.

PART TWO[1]

[The author's rather laboured introductory remarks may be briefly summarized thus. The printing of Part Two was slightly delayed for two years (from 1892–4). In the meanwhile he received enquiries concerning the work from all sides, especially from orientalists and anthropologists. In this way he was encouraged to publish what follows.]

I

THE SHABSHABA AND "MILKING OF THE STARS"

THE strongest "cure" and most successful drug tried among women to restrain their husbands from flirting with other women and keeping them to themselves, is the *Shabshaba*, and the "*milking of the stars*" (*ḥalb al-nugūm*) comes near it. They are almost alike so that in the course of time their two charms have become confused. (Sometimes they are employed for the "cure" of some of the nervous diseases which the common people assert to be due to the Jinn). The *Shabshaba* is very rare in Egypt. Only certain well-known old wives know its real nature. The most famous of these is the Shaikha Khaḍra al-Aṣwānīya al-Ṣūfīya. She was until 1309 [= 1891] living in a cell at the foot of the [p. 4] Muḳaṭṭam Hills (Cairo) near the tomb of Sīdī 'Umar ibn al-Fāriḍ. [The famous mystical poet (1181–1235). Tr.]. I believe her name is not absent from the memory of those ladies who knew her and verified the success of her "method" and who used to throng to her.

[1] [Printed in the name of the Tenth International Congress of Orientalists held at Geneva, September, 1894.]

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890)

out the contents of the egg in the dark place, he takes a lentil grain and places it on a tumour and recites over it this charm: Oh, lentil become a tumour! Oh, tumour become a lentil!

He then places the lentil inside the egg, and so on until the number of lentils equals the number of tumours. Then he runs in haste to an eastern wall on which the rays of the sun are striking and buries them in it, and the tumours fall away in consequence, in a few days, not exceeding a week. And this is truly beneficial according to the story.

The true explanation. We return, as we already said in Part I (p. 27) to the question of demons (*'afārīt*). Often they (i.e. the "old wives") assert that the hen (particularly a black one, since that is mentioned in the "prescription") has an obedient servant for herself, her eggs and their possessor, and by the secret of his influence upon diseases, or by his powerful relationship with the demon of diseases, the tumours will fall away. They believe that every disease has a demon, as is the current creed among the village witches, according to another opinion.

Often the shrinkage of the vessels feeding these tumours is brought about by a certain degree of imaginative influence. [p. 26.] Then (the tumours) wither gradually, and this is as far as medical explanation of their falling off is possible, if what the narrators say is correct.

XIII

CATARACT AND AMMONIA

EGYPT is indeed a happy hunting ground for every trader and quack. How simple our Egyptian *fellāḥ* is! He loses his life and cheapens his body for the experiments of those who trade in spirits. But the *fellāḥ* of Egypt is not to be blamed, for he has no instructor.

There came to me one day a patient complaining of his eyes. On examination I saw the left eye-ball protruding from the

4: Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 (ca. 1890) MR13 Fellahin MR13 Egypt MR1

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XX

SHAHḲA

F 164

THE "old wives" of the provinces generally use the name *shahḳa* for the malady of small-pox, which attacks infants and appears in the form of vesicles full of a liquid which is at first pure, then it becomes turbid and bursts. The "old wives" of the provinces and the mothers of the infants assert that the occurrence of these vesicles is caused by a woman or a man glancing at the child with a look of admiration for its beauty, and delight in its loveliness. Then the child falls after that into the state of that illness. Hence it is called *shahḳa* (injury by the evil eye) or *naẓra* (evil glance). They "cure" it, as is well known, by the child's mother stealing from her neighbour a piece of her dough with which she smears those vesicles.

F 753 ● 954

F 757

The true explanation. There is no advantage known in smearing these vesicles with dough. As a matter of fact this method is one belonging to the village pick-pockets and provincial thieves. The history of absurdities preserves it, and transmitters hand it down. [p. 38.] In the beginning of the whole business it was a means of accomplishing the theft of a neighbour's property under the excuse of a "prescription order." For what woman would not give her neighbour a piece of dough to cure her poor child!

XXI

A "HARMLESS" PRESCRIPTION

E 757 758

ONE of the "old wives" prescribed for one of the leading men of Cairo, who complained of a wound in his leg, the following "prescription": Powdered leg of dove [calumba] and greasy wax, the former being thrown into the latter after boiling. After cooling a little, the soft paste is taken and

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 (ca. 1890) MR13 Fellahin MR13 EGYPT MR

E 750 308

applied to the wound. It resembles soft collodium[1] except that the latter is beneficial because of its transparency, which makes it allowable to witness the progress of the wound beneath it without the need of lifting it and causing the fleshy surfaces to bleed.

XXII

THE "REMOVED" HEART

F 164 753 755

We see the "old wives" diagnosing anæmia as "the removal of the heart and its being changed from its place as a result of an accident." They "cure" it as follows: The patient sits as in the case of *Takrīfa* (see Part I, p. 19) [p. 39] and the "old wife" sits down in front of him and places her fore-finger under the xiphoid cartilage, which they imagine is "the feather of the heart" (ريشة القلب) or its gristle. Then after moving it a little the "old wife" cries out, as if she had stumbled upon a buried person, saying: Oh, my child! Your heart is removed and the "feather" (*rīša*) is falling considerably!

The true explanation. They assert that the xiphoid cartilage is bound to the heart by strong ties so that when the heart changes it pulls it in because it is like a tent-peg holding it firm. They "cure" the patients by one of two methods:

(1) The first is an endeavour to raise the above-mentioned "feather" to the top, i.e. returning it to its original position. It is necessary to resume this "operation" for seven days, the action lasting each day about ten minutes.

(2) The second is famous for its success. The patient is ordered to go to the door of a house opening on the west, and to hang by his right hand from that door in such a way that the side mentioned carries the rest of his body. He must have filled his mouth with water, and must remain thus without breathing for a space of time varying according to the ability of the patient. When he feels he is without power to retain his

[1] [Pyro-xylin, gun-cotton. Tr.]

respiration he spits out the water from his mouth forcibly and comes down without mishap. In most cases, however, giddiness overcomes the person, and he falls in a faint and does not get up for some time. [p. 40.]

The true treatment. Since this ailment is nought but bloodlessness, which prolongs many a long illness, its cure is comprised in taking healthy precautions such as (after the removal of the cause) the taking of iron compounds.

XXIII

THE "SEVERED" HEART

WHEN any sick person complains of weakness in his strength and withering in his body after severe fevers or very depressing illnesses the "old wives" of the village diagnose his illness as "the severing of the heart." (قطع القلب).

The true explanation. To this they attribute causes which are weaker than a spider's web, such as that the patient had in the time of his health carried something heavy for example, and they assert that the cords of the heart have been cut by this means. I know that Farag Abū Maḥmūd of the village of Munāšhela in the Province of Buḥaira (he is the eczema doctor, see Part I, p. 77) cauterizes those afflicted by this ailment, burning deeply all along the vertebral canal. Often he increases his kindness and beneficence towards the patient by burning him in the navel two or three times.

XXIV

THE "SPLITTING" OF THE EYE

EVERY day we see hundreds of *fellāḥīn* complaining of intermittent ophthalmia, especially at the beginning of the summer

5:Blackman E-5 (1923)1926 MR13 Fellahin MR13

[703] [716] hanging it round its neck till it is seven years old, after which period it will be immune.

[751] [843] The *ḳarînch* seen by King David was the queen of them all, and the promise she gave is binding on all her subjects. She herself is not, according to my informant, the "double" of any human being; she is by herself, and, like the king of the *afrīt*, lives for ever.

[304] [751] [761] If a woman's children have died one after the other, soon after they were born, when another one arrives she has it tattooed with a small round spot in the centre of the forehead, while a similar spot is tattooed on the left ankle. After this she believes that her *ḳarînch* will not attempt to touch her child.

Apparently, during the notable interview between King David and the queen of the *ḳarînchs* the latter promised him that if a child bore these marks she would not touch him or her.

[716] [753] A *ḳarînch* may do good or evil to a mother's children till they have passed the age of seven years. She only does harm, so I was told, if the mother has been doing something wrong. For instance, if the *ḳarînch* clutches a child by the throat, it means that the child's mother has been ill-tempered, and so on.

A man's *ḳarîn* does not affect his children, it only affects him. If he should lose his temper with his wife or family, or with his friends, or does wrong in any way, and goes to bed unrepentant, he may wake up in the morning and find that some illness has attacked him. This has been caused by his *ḳarîn*. When he is sorry and expresses repentance, or has called in a magician, who will give him a charm to wear under his left arm, he will be cured. [755]

[716] [753] [755] [778] If a child seems sickly and gets thinner and weaker every day, the mother knows that her *ḳarînch* is trying to draw her child away from her. Various devices are resorted to in order to mitigate this evil. Near a small village in Asyūṭ Province there is a large stone which is called the stone of the Sheikha Fāṭimeh, who is believed to be buried here. If a child is being drawn away by its mother's *ḳarînch*, the mother will take it on a Friday to this stone, near which she will place the child, and she herself will stay to watch over it. If the child goes to sleep quietly the mother knows that it will recover, but if it cries and refuses to sleep she takes it home again, knowing full well that it will shortly die. I have myself seen a child lying near the stone fast asleep, with its mother sitting close by. (Pl. XIV, Fig. 1.) [787] 1 A

In a village in Middle Egypt there is an old disused graveyard, crowned by the domed tomb of a celebrated local sheikh. The other graves are now fallen into ruin, and many of them show large, gaping hollows. (Pl. XIV, Fig. 2.) 1 A woman whose child is affected by her *ḳarînch* will take it and place it in one of these cavities, the results being the same as in the case of the stone of the Sheikha Fāṭimeh.

[755] A child may suffer from a cough, accompanied by gasping, as if it could hardly breathe. It is liable to such an attack at any time till it has passed the age of seven years. To cure it, the mother or grandmother (either paternal or maternal), or a

1 A [See Category 116, plate facing p. 168--Analyst]

5:Blackman E-5 (1923) 1926 MR13 Fellahin MR13

woman friend, will sometimes carry the child early in the morning to a *zirîbeh* made of *bûs* (dried *dura* stalks) in which the sheep are kept in the field at night. She also takes a knife with her, and, entering the *zirîbeh*, will hand the child over to the shepherd. The shepherd, having placed the child on its back on the ground, will take the knife which the woman brought with her and will place the blunt edge against the child's throat and pretend to cut it. The child will then start crying, upon which the man will remove the knife and return the child to the woman who brought it. It is believed that good angels watch over the sheep, as they are looked upon as gentle animals, and that these angels, on hearing the child cry, will drive away its mother's *ḳarînch* who has caused the illness by clutching at the child's throat. According to my informant, this belief is common all over Egypt.

I could quote many instances of illness caused to children by their mother's *ḳarînch* during this dangerous period of seven years.

That a woman's *ḳarînch* may sometimes perform a kindly action is shown in the following belief. One of the many devices resorted to by a woman whose child has died and who has failed to produce further offspring is as follows. The would-be mother will lie down between the lines on a railway track, remaining in this position while the train passes over her. One of the reasons given for this practice is that when a mother is thus frightened her *ḳarînch* will come to her with the soul of her dead child and cause it to re-enter the mother. This implies a belief in reincarnation, and I have obtained further information which points to a definite belief in rebirth. For an ancient example of belief in reincarnation reference may be made to the well-known Tale of the Two Brothers.[1]

The following is a translation of the written charm worn by an expectant mother who has reason to fear harm being done to her offspring by her *ḳarînch*. The charm is obviously Coptic, but it is used by Muslim mothers as well as those professing Christianity: "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for He is a great Lord who created the seen and the unseen things; He whom we cannot see with our eyes, and with whom no evil will dwell; who also knoweth well all things that will happen in the future; to whom all the angels cry, saying 'Hallowed be Thy Name'; from whom all evils fly away; who is praised by all things in the Heaven and all the earth, for He is a mighty Lord. Oh, mighty God, I ask Thee to protect N.N., who is carrying my protection, and protect what is in her womb, and him whom she will nurse with her milk, from the evil *ḳarînch*, for the sake of Thy mighty ring (*i.e.* the charm square)."

The probable meaning of the square is, so I was told, "Go on Gabriel, go on Michael, go on Raphael, go on Suriyal, go on Maniyal, for the sake of our Mighty God, and burn this *ḳarînch* in the fire." These are said to be the words of King David. (Pl. XIV, Fig. 3.)

[1] Petrie, *Egyptian Tales*, II, pp. 16 ff.

[See category 116, plate facing P. 168 -- Analyst]

6: Rasoul--1 U-5 (no date) 1955 MR13 Fellahin MR13

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Zar in Egypt.

Kawthar Abdel-Rasoul

There is a certain ceremony called Zar among the realm of superstitious beliefs in Egypt. This belief is firstly widely disputed among the Egyptians themselves being mainly opposed by men and taking the bulk of its adherents from the masses of women, especially the uneducated ones in the country and the artisans' wives in the towns. We can say that it is certainly not nation wide, but more or less a feminine practice.

Briefly summarizing the whole idea, we can say that it is a belief in some spirits who, due to what we cannot say, secretly enter the body of the victim, establish themselves there and cannot be got rid of. The Zar ceremony is performed on those people with the purpose of soothing the spirits and persuading them not to do any harm to the possessed person.

In this paper we shall try to give a short account of the Zar-ceremony and conclude by comparing it with similar practices in the Sudan and Abyssinia.

The Elements of the Zar.

1. The Patient:

The possessed person is in most cases a woman and only rarely a man. This rule is also applicable in the Sudan and Abyssinia. The patients can be classified as follows:

(a) Women who are physically or mentally ill and have no hope to be cured by doctors or psychiatrists. As a last resource they turn to the Zar. Such a woman believes a priori that she is possessed by a spirit causing her disease and therefore nothing but the Zar can cure her of it.

(b) Women who give birth to a deformed child or whose babies are stillborn. The Zar-ceremony is performed on them in order to stop the spirits from doing any more harm to her babies.

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/81 cont'd/

and was also found in the New Kingdom of Ancient Egypt. It is further known from Abyssinia and Nubia. /82/

(d) the Sutari: a tall slim man, wearing a white "galabiah" and a big leather belt, about 20 cm wide, embroidered with cowrie shells on the upper edge and decorated with about one hundred goat-hooves at the lower edge; in front there are two mirrors. The belt is called "El-Mangur" and fixed tightly around the hips, so that rhythmical twisting produces a distinct rattling sound. (4) This man leads the women in front of him during the dance; he has the same function as the "Abu-el-Leel" dancer. [535]

There are further some women who play the duff and drums and a gourd rattle. (5) This band is specialized on the music of Sultan El-Sudani, the sultan of the red jinn and the Habashi spirits.

All three kinds of band participate in a big Zar. One after the other they play their special tunes and songs. These songs are mostly very primitive. The words refer to the Zar which is performed for the sake of sultan ...., his attention is drawn to the sacrifices and music offered on his behalf and he is entreated to pardon the patient and not to harm her (6) any more.

5. The Sultans or "El-Asyaid" (masters):

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These are Jinns or spirits; they are, however, never called thus, as they are believed to be the kings and owners of land and sea, according to one of my informants. These spirits are harmful to persons they possess until their desires are fulfilled. As will be seen later on, these spirits may be classified into regional groups or families. Usually a certain group of spirits dwell in one body and it is only rarely that it is inhabited by more than one group. It is believed that a possessed individual will have to stay this way for the rest of his life, for the spirits will never leave him. The Zar-ceremony thus does not aim at getting rid of the spirit, but at inducing him not to harm the person's body, heart and brain. [755] [782]

(4) Zenkovsky S., "Zar and Tambura in Omdurman", Sudan Notes and Records, vol. XXXI, part I, June 1950

(5) Curt Sachs, p. 26

(6) Ahmed Saleh, Folklore, Cairo 1955, p. 124

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796 521 526 in conversation, ball playing, and gymnastic exercises, and those whose conscience allows it smell the contents of their dram-bottle as well as the fresh air and roast meat. Health must be inhaled to-day since the five days' period of terror, 753 796 796 the time of the *chamasin*, is now at hand. A serpent then wanders over the earth and infects the atmosphere with its poisonous breath, leaving behind small-pox, plague, cholera ("the yellow wind"), and all other varieties of disease. The curse is not removed till Whitsuntide dissolves it.

THE NIGHT OF THE DROP.

796 823 On the 17th of June a "drop" falls (according to the ancients a tear of Isis) into the decreasing waters of the Nile, and impregnates the wonderful stream. Its effect is soon after observed in the dirtier colour of the water, then in its more rapid flow, and lastly in its increase and overflow. On this day, or on the night, the "night of the drop," young and old flock to the banks of the blessed stream.

THE NERUS DAY.

541 On the 10th September, the first day of the Coptic solar year, the river has reached to about its highest point, and on this day—the *nerûs*, the people give themselves up to the pleasures of the carnival. For three days it is all up with the rule of the Turks; every little town chooses for itself in its own way, and from its own midst, a ruler (*abu nerus*), who has a towering fool's cap set upon his head, and a long spectral beard of flax fastened to his chin, and is clothed in a peculiar garment. With a long sceptre in his hand, and followed by a crowd of correspondingly-dressed bailiffs, hangmen, and scribes, he promenades the streets and turns his steps straight to the hall of the chief magistrate. Every one bends before him, the guards at the door make way, the governor of the province or of the town has the humour to let himself be ousted, while the new dignitary seats himself on his throne and holds a most rigorous criminal investiga-

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tion, from which even the displaced functionary and his abettors do not escape. The hangman's assistant of yesterday is sentenced to be hanged, the bastinadoer to be beaten, the *kaskatib* or chief secretary to imprisonment, immense taxes are imposed, and all decisions are set down on a sheet of paper. There is no pardon for the condemned unless on the payment of a few piasters as backshish. Thus they move from house to house, the taxes being levied in the form of backshish. Three days does the capricious rule of the ephemeral tyrant last; at length he, that is his dress, is condemned to death by burning, and from the ashes creeps out the slavish Fellah. In the times of good-natured Mohammed Ali the abu nerus is said to have ventured even to approach his throne, but the harmless jest has now fallen a good deal out of practice. The ancients also celebrated feasts when the Nile was at its height, in the month of Tût, as, for instance, that of Hermes on the 10th of this month. The anniversary of the opening of the canal is kept only at Cairo.

BIRTH-DAY CEREMONIES.

The monotony of the work-day life of the Mohammedan, interrupted by no Sunday, is richly and agreeably varied by domestic ceremonies and observances. However thrifty or niggardly he usually is, on such occasions he spares no expense.

When the time comes that a child is to see the light the midwife makes her appearance with her seat, and displays the greatest activity on behalf of her suffering charge; female relatives and neighbours also come in crowds to encourage and advise. It is often sought to lighten the difficult task by hanging opium about the mother, or making her eat the drug. The newly-born child is merely dried, not washed, and immediately laid upon a corn sieve; beside its head lies the knife with which the umbilical cord has been cut, and corn is scattered round about. This procedure is intended to drive away the *karina*, that is, the child's evil brother or sister from the spirit realm that always makes its appearance and tor-

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ments the poor child of humanity till it sickens and falls into convulsions, which are therefore also called karina (see chap. vii.). Immediately after the birth the mother receives melted butter with honey and fenugreek, and instead of fasting she must daily eat at least a fowl or a good piece of meat, which her female friends and neighbours give her. On the sixth day the mother in her turn sends these a plate of *kishk* (decoction of wheat and sour milk) as a sign that they are invited for the following day. Above the head of the sleeping child is placed on this night a pitcher, hung with gold coins and lighted with tapers, the pitcher being long-necked (*dorûk*) in the case of boys, short-necked (*kulleh*) in that of girls.

On the morning of the seventh day (*yum es-subû'a*) the house is filled with female visitors. The child is placed upon a sieve, tapers are fixed upon metal plates and on the point of a sword, and the child is carried in procession through the whole house, while the midwife scatters *bissle*, that is, wheat, barley, pease, and salt as provender for the wicked spirits. The child is shaken in the sieve, being thereby believed to lose fear for the rest of its life, and its eyes are held up to the sun to sharpen them. The cymbals and small drums, the singing and trilling of the women, make the outer world acquainted with the joy within the house. The guests present the mother and midwife with money and gold, for which they distribute parched chick-peas, St. John's bread, and walnuts.

But the father must also keep the seventh day as a festival, especially if the child is a boy, though in many cases he does not dare up till this time to look upon his own child, since he might possibly, and quite against his will, do some harm to his tender offspring by a glance of his eye. He invites his friends to a feast, and entertains them with Koran reading, zikrs, and similar pious amusements, or sends for instrumental players, singers, and dancing-girls. The son is brought in a sieve and shown to the guests, who rejoice with the father, and perhaps also leave some gifts. A plate of candy-sugar is now sent to the kadi or some other theologian; he sucks